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THE EMPIRE AT WAR



A study of the great battles of the Empire

From the time of Sigmar to the Storm of Chaos, the Empire has fought to keep its lands and peoples safe. Here follows an account of some of the most notable battles in the history of this great land of men. It was at Black Fire Pass that the Empire was first forged, at Hel Fenn did the vampire lord Mannfred von Carstein finally fall and at the gates of Kislev did Magnus the Pious throw back the Chaos hordes of Asavar Kul.

A volume for all Empire generals and fully illustrated throughout, the tactics, generals, weapons and equipment of five major battles are explored with detailed battle maps in this background book. Guile and misdirection, envelopment, protecting the flanks; all of these strategies and more are discussed. Delve into the history of the Empire and become immersed in the narrative of some of its most important conflicts against its deadliest foes.

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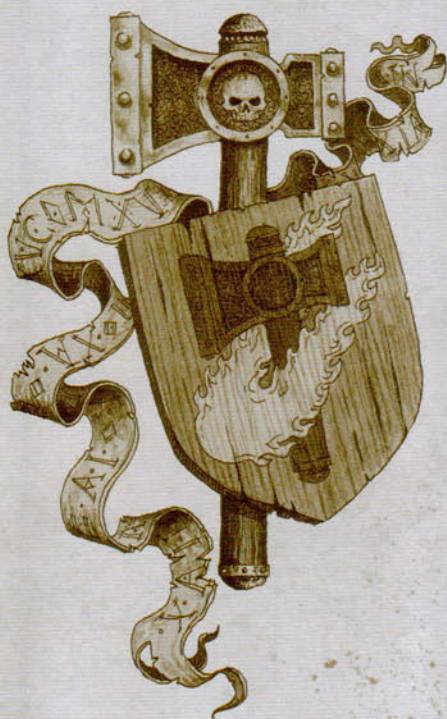
Marshlands

Talabecland

The Empire at War

Five Battles
Five Lessons
Five Ways to Prevail
in the Art of War

By Grandmarshall Blucher von Vincke



*This book is dedicated to the men who serve in the rank and file:
the spearmen, archers, gunners and greatswords. You were the backbone, steel and
heart of my campaigns. I still hear your marching feet in my dreams.
May the grand armies of the Empire fight forever and a day.*

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Valour



~ Courage ~



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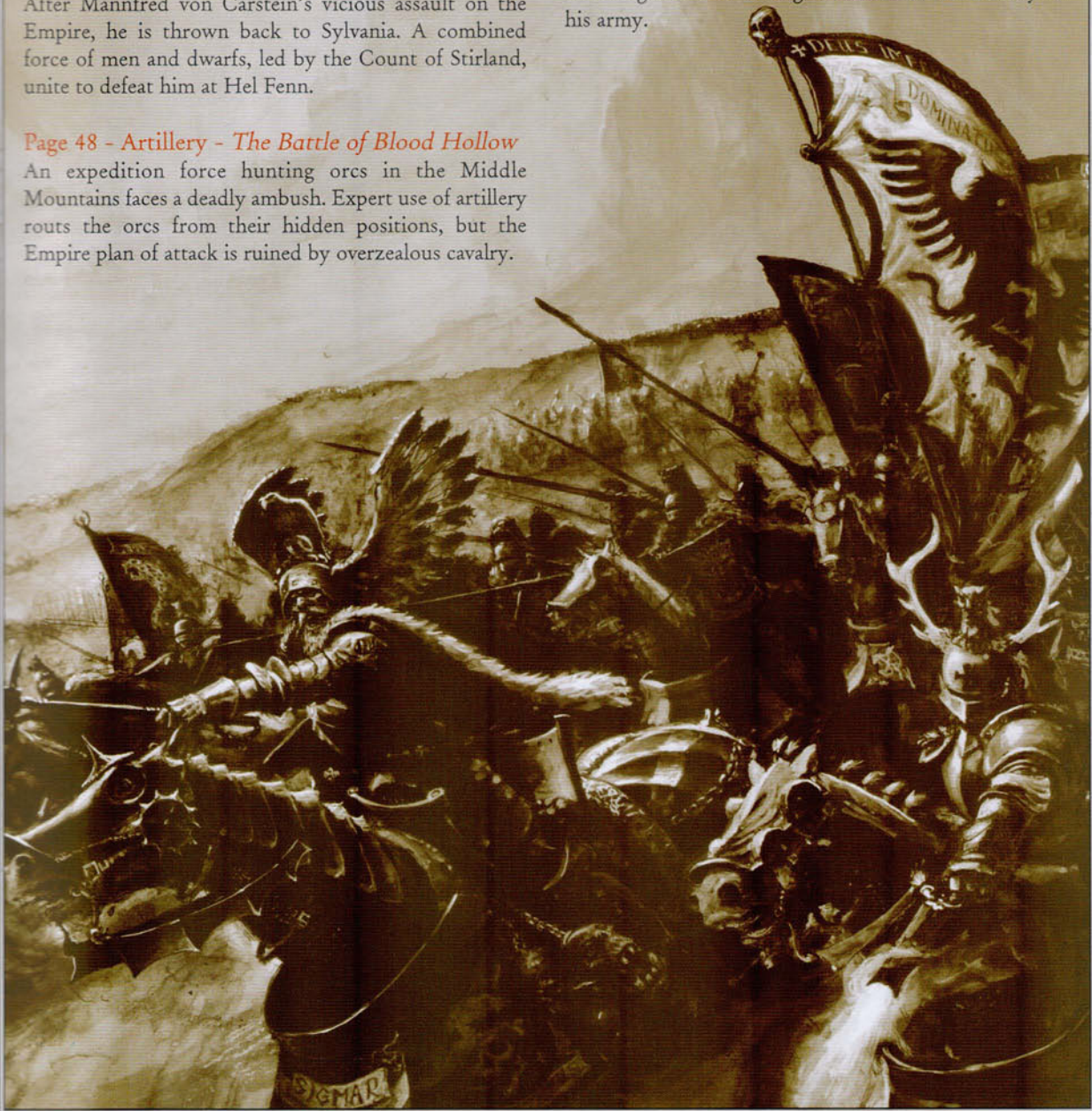
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Author's Introduction

Grandmarshall von Vincke, depicted here in full battle armour. Von Vincke, a veteran of many battles, lost his eye fighting beastmen at the borders of the Drakwald Forest.

Since my retirement from the vaulted position of Grandmarshall of the Grand Armies of Altdorf and Wielder of the Emperor's Sword - a position I held for twenty tumultuous years - many people have asked what is my most abiding memory of that time. Was it the feeling of victory at Franktown after I quelled the Peat Uprising? Was it the sight of the magnificent Reiksguard scattering Greengut Ironlung's goblin horde like leaves before an autumn gale at the Battle of Taranto Pass? Was it the sound of the artillery batteries pounding the massed ranks of Grey Seer Grabsnitch into pulped-flesh oblivion? Although it is true that these are happy and lasting memories, it is in fact the smells of war, which linger most tenaciously in my mind.

These smells are sometimes so acute, that when I wake I believe myself to be in my battle pavilion, preparing for war: the acridity of gunpowder smoke, the muskiness of destriers eager for the charge, the copper tang of spilling blood and the grease on my well-worn armour which hangs now in my banquet hall. And the most pervasive smell of all? Fear. Fear is the soldier's constant enemy, which evidences itself in the reek of sweat and urine.

Many colleagues have suggested that I should record my career as a general in a book. They say it would provide posterity: an invaluable document on the life and times of a Grandmarshall. However, I am not a vainglorious man, and the idea of inflicting my tales in the field on generations to come is abhorrent (as my ever-tolerant and long-suffering wife, Matildha, will no doubt agree).

Instead, I decided to put my experience, hard-earned expertise and interest in the military history of our noble Empire to better use. I set upon writing a book to instruct and teach all military students in the art of war. Using specific battles, some well documented, others somewhat neglected by history, I will demonstrate five aspects of conflict that should be considered by all generals before they settle on a strategy.

The book you now hold in your hands is not an instruction manual on how to win; the nature of conflict is mutable, and methods of war are now advancing at a speed unparalleled. Lessons of war need to be altered and relearned as the tools with which we fight them become more sophisticated.



But there are some aspects of conflict that I believe will never change, and no matter how the methodologies and tactics advance as the decades of strife roll by, they will remain of great and tantamount importance.

No doubt, other military historians and scholars will disagree with my choices and argue and curse me for a humbug. But I say to them: go back to your dusty studies! I have stood on the front lines. I have faced many enemies and overcome them all. I was a soldier, and I fought with soldiers. The lessons on these pages were paid for with blood, its words forged in the fires of battle.

I am not a scholar by profession and I ask the reader - who is perhaps better used to the more polished prose of artisans - to indulge me in my soldier's rhetoric. Be assured that every word is written by a man who knows war and conflict with the same intimacy and obsession that a man may harbour for an illicit and troublesome lover; what I may lack in word-smithery, I make up for in real, undiluted experience.

But I tell you, when you turn the pages of this book, I want you to feel the tramp of marching feet on the ground and hear the war chants of the regiments in your ears, to smell the smoke and hear the thunder. But most importantly, I want you to spare a thought for the men who fight. In this world that grows darker and more dangerous with each changing of the season, it is by the soldiers' sacrifice on far-flung battlefields that you are kept safe in your beds; by the spilling of their blood does the Empire stay strong.

To the soldiers of an Empire at War, I salute you, each and every one.

Grandmarshall Blucher von Vincke (retired), Altdorf, 2521



Honour



Guile

The Battle of the Talabec

‘The rain-swollen river was swift and tried to pull me under and all the time they fired hails of arrows at us. Men died all around me. I looked up and saw a row of spears pointing at me and smoke from battlefield fires drifting in choking clouds. I don’t know how we got over the river, but when we did we gave them hell and then some.’

– Piter Reiser,
Talabecland Swordsmen



CIVIL WAR. In 1360 the Empire became mired in a bloody civil war which lasted for hundreds of years. The Empire was still young and immature, and the internecine tribal rivalry that was so prevalent before Sigmar's day made an unwelcome return.

The cause of unrest was the desire among the counts for the title of Emperor. Power and the quest for it corrupts men, and war often follows. The elections had taken place at the end of the previous year and the Elector Count of Stirland – a powerful man and astute politician – had won the vote by a close margin. His nearest rival, Ottilia of Talabecland – an ambitious and fearless woman – accused the count in front of the entire court of using bribery and his links to the votive assembly to ensure a favourable result. With admirable impudence, she declared herself Empress and stormed out of the building.

She was not the only person who suspected that Stirland had obtained his position through corruption, and many flocked to Ottilia's cause, promising support for the war which was becoming increasingly likely. Her most powerful ally was the High Priest of Ulric. The High Priest left Middenheim with his supporters and threw in his lot with Ottilia in Talabecland.

The die was cast. Talabecland and Stirland gathered their forces and as their diplomats returned, ousted from their embassies, they knew war was upon them.

It is hard to describe the feelings a man carries in his heart when all the devices and wiles of the diplomats have failed and war impedes with the inevitability of the End Times themselves. For myself – an unashamed man of war since I joined the ranks of the Emperor's army as a lowly runner to the great General Kilbrecht on his campaigns against the orcs – it is a heady mixture of emotions: excitement polluted with fear for my life, and dread at the unavoidable pain and loss that good men will suffer at the hand of the enemy. But this is underpinned with an unsailable sense of duty and pride in my work, which I believe I was put on this earth by Sigmar to do.

OPENING MOVES. As the weeks after Ottilia's dramatic exit from the assembly sped by, she became increasingly concerned about her strategic position. Although many powerful men had sided with her, it was apparent that Stirland had the best of the support. Ottilia began to shed allies as they lost faith in her cause, and only constant lobbying from the High Priest of Ulric kept a semblance of unity within her court.

Such is the peril of entering into an alliance with powerful men; they are ever watchful of their own interests and will fly away like vultures as soon as they lose faith. Personally, I always maintained rigorous control over my allies, and never once sacrificed overall power. However, Ottilia's delicate position forbade this sort of dictatorial control, and she was forced to cooperate with her allies, or lose their support entirely.

Time was not on Ottilia's side, but she resisted making the first move. Some historians have postulated that this was a sign of her weakness. They argue that she did not want to go



down in history as being the instigator of a civil war, but this shows their lack of understanding of this resolute and ruthless woman. Ottilia's decision to wait in Talabecland was because she did not have the military strength to go on the offensive. It was a shrewd, yet risky, decision.

Ottilia gambled by trusting her remaining allies – mainly the eastern and southeastern states – to stick with her until Stirland made his move. Stirland had been under increasing pressure from his allies to crush Ottilia as soon as possible. 'After all,' the Count of Ostland said, 'she is only a woman.'

This quote surely contains the sentiments of countless men who have fallen victim to their own stupidity. I have been married to the formidable Madam von Vincke for four decades, and I can honestly say that she is the only person in Sigmar's lands who wields any authority over me; no man, orc, beastman or daemon has instilled the same fear in my heart as the sight of my wife in one of her rages. Men, I say to you this: underestimate the fairer sex at your peril.

At the birth of spring in 1360, the Count led his army from Stirland into Talabecland. Villagers fled before him, despite his assurances that they would come to no harm. The invaders' speed surprised Ottilia, and when her scouts reported Stirland's steady progress she knew the tense wait was over. War had come to her land, and she prepared to lead her army out to battle.

'As it was, we felt relief to be on the move after such a protracted wait. We were outnumbered, our lands invaded and the enemy bearing down fast upon us. I never saw the Countess more comfortable in her role than at that time of crisis,' wrote Lord Helmut Weisser, Marshall of Ottilia's cavalry.

Many historians have argued that the decision Ottilia made to leave the safety of Talabheim was misguided. Talabheim is built within a huge crater, surrounded by natural defenses of cliffs and mountains. There are provisions enough within those formidable walls to supply the citizens of the city and her army for years. It is a perfect fortress and Stirland would have been hard pressed to breach it.

But these historians overlook an important aspect of the Ottilia's situation. She had just proclaimed herself Empress of all the lands of men; how could she hope to prove her worth by hiding in her city? It was imperative for her to prove that she could take on her enemies in open battle. In short, she could not hope to rule the Empire, or rely on her wavering allies to stay by her side, if she remained within her walls. It would be perceived as a sign of weakness and seriously damage her claim to the throne.

The colours of the Stirland forces included archers of Stirland in typical green and yellow and Averland halberdiers wearing green and red.

FORCES OF STIRLAND. Written records from this period of history are rare, but fortunately for posterity Stirland kept a personal diary, in which he details, with painstaking thoroughness, the form of his army.



Stirland had taken his time in gathering a strong and well-balanced force, and by spring it comprised of eight thousand spearmen, four thousand swordsmen and two thousand missile troops of which several hundred bore crossbows. His main strength lay with his mounted troops and he fielded three hundred heavy cavalry, including one hundred

Knights of Sigmar's Blood – the cream of the Emperor's armoury – and one thousand lesser known, more esoteric, orders. All told, he had around fifteen thousand men at his command.

His infantry were mostly levies, but they were trained, hardy and well-equipped. As well as regiments from Stirland, the army boasted forces from neighbouring Ostermark and Averland. It was rare for a state to have a large standing army and Stirland was no exception. The fighting potential of armies was at that time decided by cavalry.

It is interesting to note that at this time, artillery was still a rare addition to Empire armies. The artillery schools had yet to be founded, and only the dwarfs were capable of building effective black powder weapons. In spite of this, Stirland brought to battle with him a number of catapults, which, despite their crude design, could wreak terrible devastation amongst the Talabecland forces. Otilia had nothing to compare with them.



A great swathe of troops tramped across the Empire in column to face the would-be usurper, Otilia of Talabecland.





An artistic rendition of the two protagonists: the Countess of Talabeccland and the Elector Count of Stirland. Note the war-like nature of both subjects, married up with the trappings of royalty and status. It is a Romantic piece that neither noble would ever have posed for.

The state colours of Talabecland are red and yellow as depicted in this illustration of a modern Empire soldier. The city state of Talabheim echoes the red as shown in the garb of the swordsmen opposite, but twins this with white.

FORCES OF TALABECLAND. At first glance, it appears that Ottilia was at a grave disadvantage. Talabecland and her dwindling allies could field barely ten thousand men, and they were of a somewhat disparate nature: mercenary bands from all over the south and Border Princes, freelancer knights and the entire population of men from villages who turned up to defend their state. A horde of flagellants also flocked to the banner of Talabecland, doubtless moved to believe the Empire was doomed by the internecine conflict. How Ottilia managed

to forge them into a viable and cohesive fighting force is testament to her organisational skills.

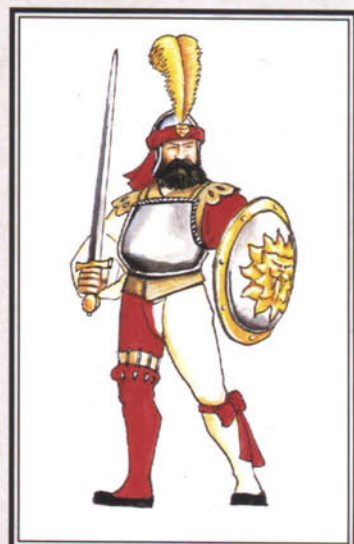
Creating unity in her ranks was one thing, but finding more men to join them was quite another. After scouring the land for men of a fighting age and digging deep into her coffers to pay for mercenaries, she still had fewer men than Stirland. The army that marched from Talabheim consisted of four thousand spearmen and pike – of which many were Border Princes cohorts – one thousand five hundred swordsmen, one thousand bowmen and only three thousand horses including freelance knights,

templars of the White Wolf, the High Priest of Ulric's bodyguard and templars of Taal. Her trump card was her personal cavalry bodyguard, the Order of the Black Rose. They were only one hundred strong, but when she led them (as she had done many times) they were unstoppable.

Where Stirland's army wore the state colours of green and yellow (with regimental variations), many of Ottilia's forces had to wear their own clothes. Ottilia ordered everyone – her self-included – to wear a red and yellow ribbon on their left arm in a show of identity and unity. This seemingly insignificant detail did much to encourage an esprit-de-corp in Ottilia's mongrel army.

'On the eve of our march to battle, the Countess spoke to the men: 'Wear your ribbons with pride,' she cried. 'In the line of battle, you protect the man on your right with your shield, and in doing so you protect his ribbon, the red and yellow of our fair state that we must defend from the invader.'

'Such a cheer went up that I swear the Count of Stirland must have heard it where he lurked on the east bank of the river, eighty leagues away,' wrote Lord Helmut Weisser.



Ottilia's army were a rag-tag band of free company fighters and a small proportion of professional soldiers.



Freelance knights bear many arcane devices and symbols. These are examples of some of the warriors fighting for the Countess of Talabecland.



A priest of Ulric, bearing a fierce-looking wolf's head hammer. Note the pelts and skulls that distinguish devotees of Ulric from other Empire priests.

Ottilia's Cavalry Bodyguard: The Order of the Black Rose

I felt the ground quake and our pikes clattered together as the vibrations got stronger. From over the brow of the hill came the Order of the Black Rose, heading straight for our pike wall. We couldn't believe it! Cavalry charging pikes from the front was suicide, but there they were at full tilt, with lances lowered. I have never been so afraid. It was like facing metal-clad gods, not an inch of flesh was visible. Well, we dropped our pikes and scattered. Who wouldn't?

So wrote an unnamed soldier at the Battle of Guildfried Field, where the Order of the Black Rose routed a pike phalanx of two thousand men.

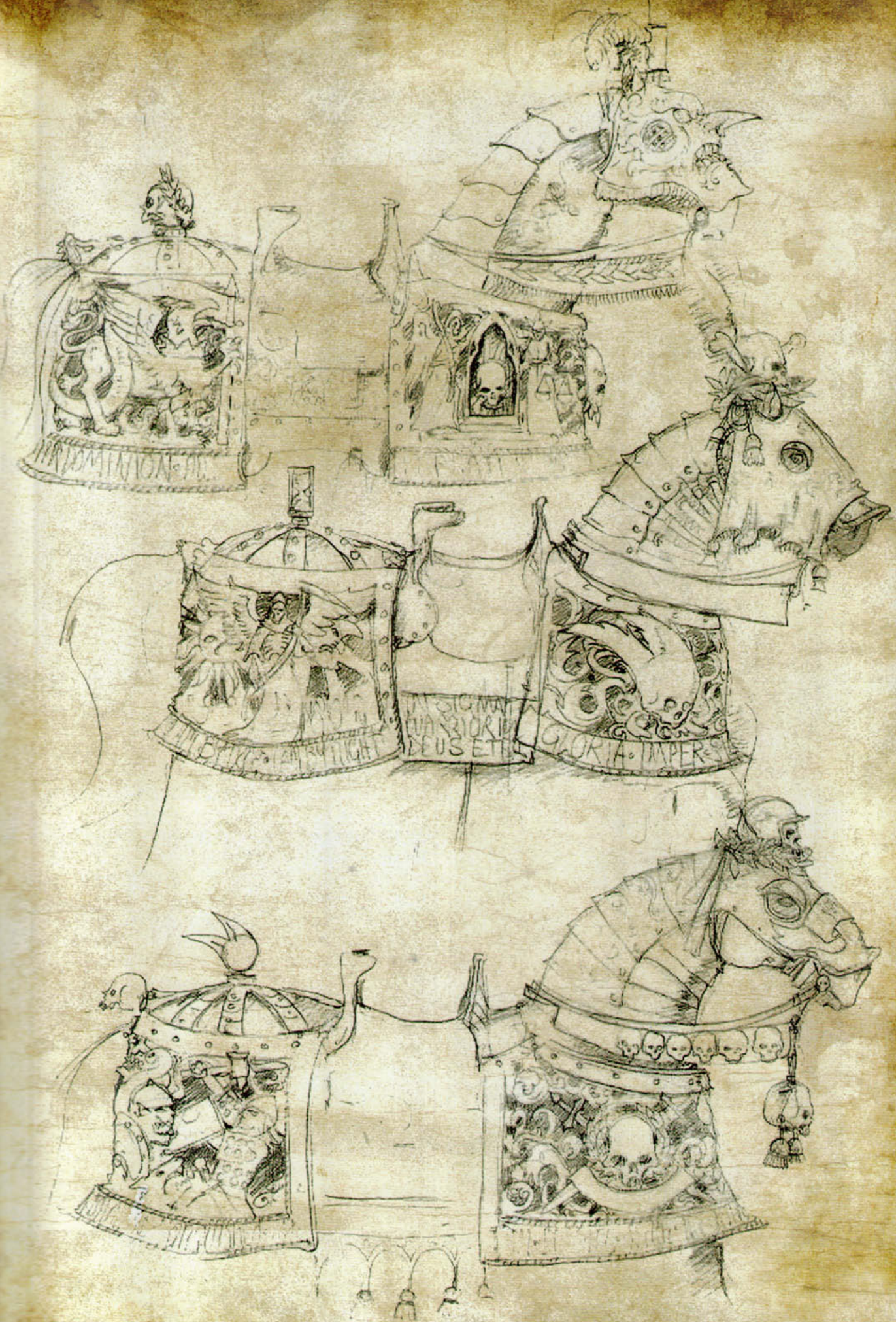
The heavy cavalry bodyguard of Ottilia of Talabecland are justly famed throughout the land. Recruited from the best warriors of the state, their ranks are always kept to one hundred men. It is a mark of great honour to be chosen, and each man is paid and equipped at the state's expense.

Their armour is stained black in a reference to their name, except their gauntlets which are red, signifying the spilt blood of their enemies. They carry heavy lances, maces, swords and kite shaped shields emblazoned with a rose and thorns entwined around a bleeding heart.

What makes the knights unique is their horses' armour. The barding of the knights' steeds suggests the affiliation of the order with the god Morr: skulls, dreaded Morr himself and other motifs are all prevalent. Such a reminder of a man's mortality coupled with the dread nature of the imagery upon the barding is a terrifying sight for any enemy.

Every knight brings his own fighting expertise and knowledge with him to teach his compatriots. In this way, the fighting prowess of the men is well rounded and unique. It is the knight's sworn duty to stay with the Countess and protect her from harm.





A knight of the
forces of
Stirland.

DEPLOYMENT. Although Stirland's muster was languid, his march was swift and Ottilia was taken by surprise at the speed in which he penetrated her land. Over the frost-hardened ground the column marched an astonishing twenty miles a day (although on my campaign in the Border Princes my men marched an average of twenty three miles a day, and over much harder terrain). By the middle of spring, Stirland was only eighty miles from the city of Talabheim.

As Ottilia struggled to gather her army, Stirland set up camp on the east side of a river and waited. This battle is called the Battle of the Talabec, but in fact it took place on a narrow tributary the Talastamm, three miles north of that great river. For simplicity's sake, and in keeping with the given name of the battle, I shall refer to the river as the Talabec.

Lord Helmut
Weisser draws
up his plans for
the battle.



Many historians have wondered why Stirland chose to do this, and consider it to be a blunder on his part. Why did he not press on and lay siege to the city? Why stop when he was so close?

He stopped for several good reasons. Firstly, his men were exhausted. He had pushed them hard to penetrate so deep into Talabecland and they needed rest. He was also ill equipped to lay siege to Talabheim, which was heavily fortified and considered to be virtually impervious to attack. Most importantly, time was on his side. He had plenty of land to forage to feed his men, and he had set up a supply line down the route his army had marched. Stirland deduced that Ottilia would have to march out to meet him, or lose the battle for the throne without a fight as her allies would lose faith in her. By waiting, Stirland could draw her out of her city to a battlefield of his choice where his superior numbers could destroy her.

As for Ottilia, she knew that her allies were wavering and she had to act soon to stand any chance of defeating Stirland, who could rampage across her lands as she hid in her city. This, she said, simply would not do.

Stirland sent out scouts to discover the lay of the land and deployed his forces defensively. He occupied the village of Zweihäfen, which lay on a pronounced bend in the river. Ottilia would have to cross the water to fight him.

However, he was concerned that the enemy might try to flank and trap him with his back to the river. Scouts reported a ford across the river about five miles south of his position, so to protect his left flank he sent one thousand spears and six hundred archers to hold the ford. Confident in his position and comfortably ensconced in the Ox Bow Lake Inn, Stirland settled down to wait for Ottilia. A sound strategy this; whenever I billeted at a town or village, I always



Deployment at the Fort



Deployment at the Ford

took up residence at the local ale house where I could partake of the local brews.

As soon as Otilia's army was mustered, she ordered a swift march east to meet the invader. An atmosphere of fear pervaded the camp as they rested. Her soldiers knew they were outnumbered and every night men deserted, slipping quietly away into the forest. At dusk and after six days' march they reached the Talabec where the Stirlanders waited. Soldiers gossip more than fishwives, and one man's dissenting remarks can spread like wildfire in the quiet hours before dawn, but so too can a rousing general's speech.

The Talabeclanders heard the sound of singing and saw hundreds of cooking fires twinkling among the buildings of Zweihäfen. Pikes and spears were stacked together like sheaves of wheat and they could hear many horses stamping and snorting. The reports of the size of Stirland's army were not exaggerated. Gloom settled over Otilia and her generals as they considered their options.

Lord Helmut Weisser musters the Talabecland troops into position, ready for the diversion.

THE DIVERSION. 'We knew we had to even the odds. The Stirlanders outnumbered us and we needed to cross the river to get to them. It was an intolerable situation. Then the Countess, Ulric bless her, had a brilliant idea,' Lord Helmut Weisser stated.

Battle would be joined the next day; there was no going back. Otilia stood no chance if she ordered her men over the river into the missiles and spears of the Stirlanders, so she devised a strategy that has gone down in history as one of the most cunning diversions ever attempted, and one that I copied at the triumphant action at Helot's Bridge in 2515 (see *Von Vinke's Victories*, Altdorf Press).

At four in the morning and after hours of torrential rain, she ordered half of her infantry and cavalry to break camp and travel south to the ford, making as much noise as possible. The Stirlander guards heard the sound of marching men and horses heading south and reported it to a bleary-eyed Stirland.

On hearing the news, he immediately decided that Otilia was trying a flanking move on his left. If she were mobilising as many men as it sounded, the token force he had deployed at the ford would be overrun. He ordered his entire reserve and fully one-third of his front-line infantry to hasten to the ford and hold off Otilia's attack.

As Otilia's scouts bore the news of the Stirlanders' movements, she is said to have hugged Lord Weisser and skipped around her pavilion in glee. Stirland had fallen for her ruse and had committed over half his men to a



diversionary attack that would never happen, because after an hour's march most of her diversion force doubled back. Only a few companies of sword and some lancers continued to the ford, making as much noise as they could, ensuring the Stirlander scouts continued to believe that the Talabecland army was moving to flank them.

Otilia sends a small force to draw the Stirland army away to protect their left flank.



THE FIRST SHOTS. At seven in the morning, Ottilia began her attack. She advanced her spearmen and swordsmen towards the river banks in four blocks, with cavalry on the left flank and archers behind. She stood on the high ground and looked down on the village across the water. Although she knew much of Stirland's army was several miles away on a wild goose chase, she still faced a formidable enemy in a strong position. It is the moments before the first order is given which are the hardest for a general; for he knows that something terrible is about to begin, and men are going to die at his behest.

The Ottilia gave the order and her archers fired an opening volley over the heads of her advancing infantry. Stirland ordered his men to stay in cover among the buildings until the Ottilia ordered her forces across the water so the archers found few targets. With the sun rising, and mindful that Stirland would soon get wind of her diversion and order his men back, she sounded the advance.

Her men waded into the river in disciplined ranks. The water was waist high and swift flowing, and the men struggled to keep both momentum and balance. From the windows, doorways and streets of Zweihäfen the Stirlander archers and crossbowmen opened fire. Through the a steady rain of whickering arrows and crossbow bolts did the struggling Talabeclanders endure. The air shook as Stirland's catapults rocked their carriages, sending huge chunks of masonry, yielded by some of Zweihäfen's buildings, into the ranks of men on the opposite bank.

Screams mingled with dull thuds as missiles slammed into flesh, throwing men backwards. The crossbowmen in



The bloody conflict saw Imperial pitted against Imperial, as depicted in this artistic rendering of the battle at Zweihäfen.

the upper storeys of the buildings had a clear line of sight on the Ottilia's men, and they picked off targets with murderous accuracy. Crossing the river became even more difficult as bodies floated downstream and wounded men wallowed and struggled. It was a terrible ordeal.

As the first Talabeclanders reached the river bank, Stirland ordered his infantry out of cover and into blocks. Talabeclander archers fired volleys into them, hoping to keep them from forming up properly, but Stirland's men were trained well, and as the Ottilia's men scrambled up the bank they were presented with a solid wall of spears. With a defiant roar, they charged towards them.



The Talabheim halberds tightly pressed together in formation to face the superior numbers of the Stirland army.

The Depiction of the Armies of foot and horse
and the Emperor from Stirland, as they
on the Morning of the Eighth

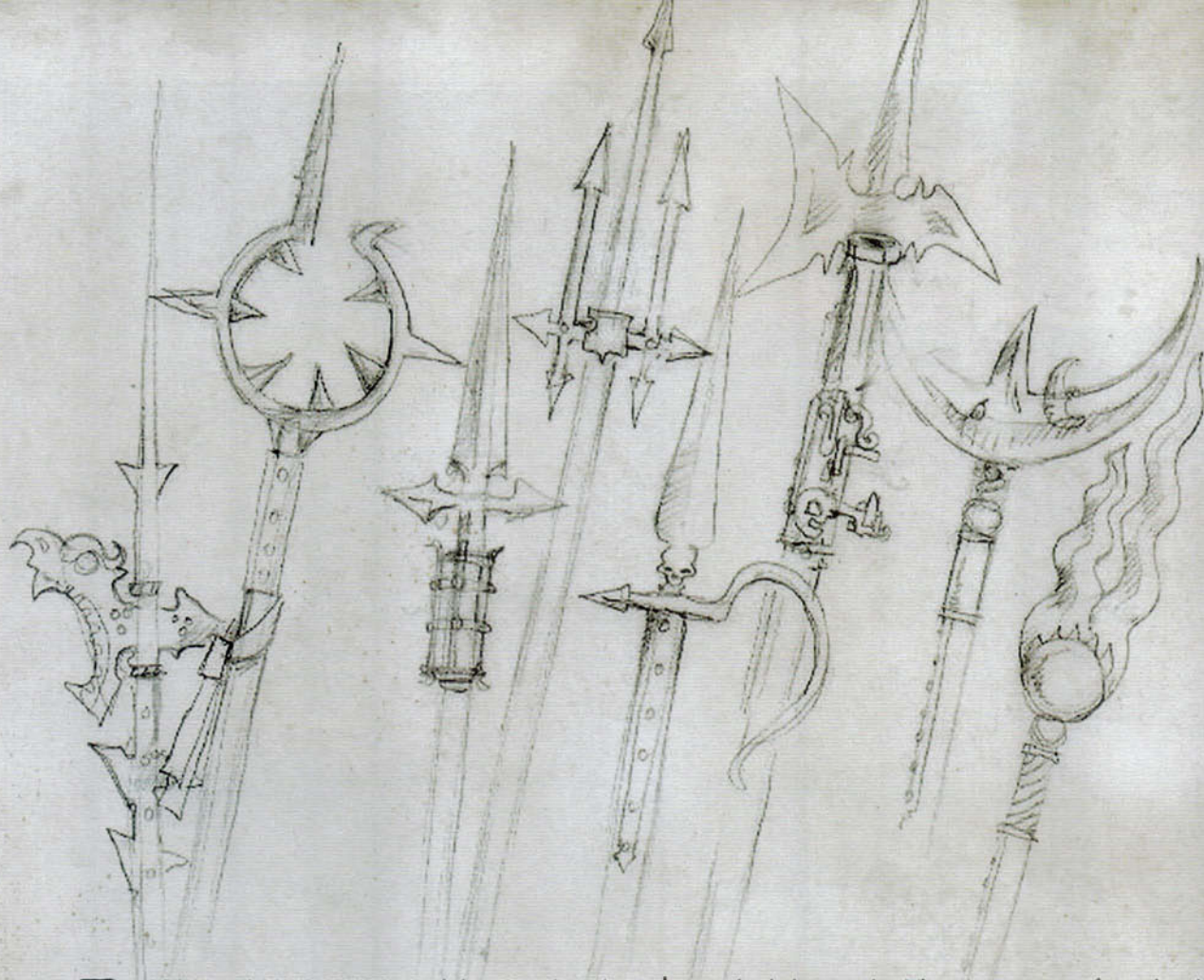


EMPERESS OTTILIA I
1360 IC



Great Forest





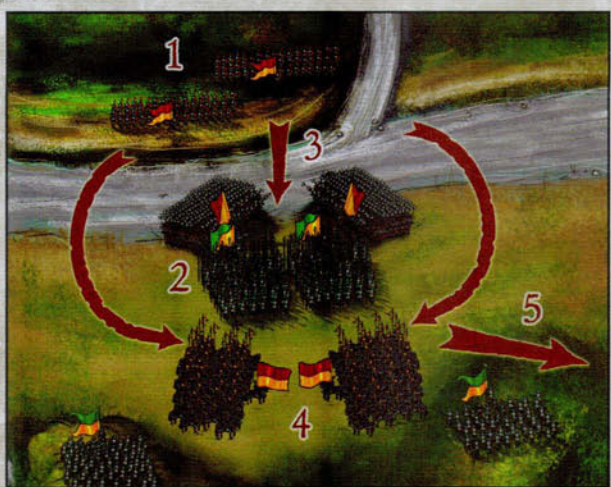
Above are depicted the many pole arms used by the armies of the Empire. Of these examples, some are more common than others and some are purely ornamental.

BATTLE AT THE FORD. Led by Captain Dieter Lieber of the Bogenhafen Dogsoldiers, a mounted regiment of sell-swords, Ottilia's two-thousand-strong diversionary force reached the ford as the first shots rang out over Zweihäfen. The infantry raced across the ford and closed on Stirland's spearmen.

It is at this point that the weakness of Stirland's strategy becomes apparent. He had not sent a scout to inform his men at the ford that they should expect reinforcements (who were still several miles away), or that a sizeable enemy force was heading towards them. So when Ottilia's men emerged from the forest and charged them across the river, they were taken

completely by surprise. They were not even formed up in line and many of the soldiers were still breaking their fast. By the time Stirland's archers on the ridges were assembled and ready to shoot, the infantry was already engaged so they could not fire without hitting their own men.

In a textbook manoeuvre, Captain Lieber led his freelancers across the ford, behind the beleaguered spearmen and into their rear and breaking the formation apart. The survivors fled, followed by the archers who were no match for cavalry. With minimal losses, Ottilia's men forded the river and headed north to meet Stirland's diversionary force and keep it occupied for as long as possible.



The Battle at the Ford

1. Ottilia sends a small force to draw Stirland army away to protect her left flank.
2. Stirland sends over half his army to see off the perceived threat, committing his forces in a pointless skirmish.
3. Ottilia attacks depleted Stirlanders across the river. Stirland forces are driven back. Only a decisive cavalry attack keeps the Ottilia back.
4. Ottilia's flanking cavalry falls on Stirland rear. The Stirland army is routed and the Count of Stirland flees.
5. Ottilia sends her reserves into the remnants of the Stirland army's rear and chases them to a walled farm.

The Phalanx

The phalanx is a special formation used by heavy infantry who fight with long-hafted spears. It was first developed and used with spectacular results by the savage Jutone tribe, before the time of Sigmar. The word derives from the Jutone word for implacable. In that time, most of the tribes fought in warbands, where the prevailing attitude of the warrior on the field of battle was one of individualism and personal honour. This resulted in great feats of bravery, but did not lend itself to moulding a strong, cohesive fighting force.

It may be partly due to the land of the Jutones being one of open plains that first led to them using the phalanx. The phalanx formation needs open and unbroken ground to work, and the deep forests and mountainous areas inhabited by most of the other tribes was not suitable.

The phalanx is a close-order formation, no less than four ranks deep. The Jutone was armed with a spear or pike (up to ten feet long), a large shield and helmet. The Jutones drilled hard and practised marching in this formation until their warlord judged them to be at a standard to give them a name. This encouraged great pride in each phalanx, and ensured each man knew his comrades and would fight hard to defend them.

In combat, the front rank (usually the best warriors available) would lock shields and lower their pikes. The ranks behind would do the same, thrusting their weapons over the shoulders of the men in front to form a bristling hedge of spear points. Their success depended entirely on holding the formation on the march and in combat. On meeting the enemy the phalanx would push forward,



hoping to break them and holding them at bay with their long weapons. Phalanxes are particularly effective against cavalry.

The phalanx proved to be nearly indestructible, and the Jutones defended their lands for many years against all enemies with its use. However, weaknesses were exposed. The phalanx is a front assault formation, slow moving and not easy to manoeuvre. Jutones would place units of swordsmen and skirmishers to protect their flanks but with limited success. Phalanxes are also vulnerable to fast-moving missile troops as the tightly packed ranks make easy targets.

As enemies exploited these weaknesses, the phalanx fell out of use, but it has not completely died out. Its legacy can still be seen in the shield wall and pike square. However, the most important aspect of warfare that the Jutone phalanx demonstrated was the idea of cooperative fighting. By effectively replacing the idea of personal heroism on the battlefield and replacing it with close formations, where men fought in conjunction with one another, the Jutone warlords showed the way towards a new way of fighting, a way that still serves the Empire well today.

STREET FIGHTING. As the Talabeclanders struggled to cross the river, a scout approached and reported to Otilia.

'The scout reported that the heavy rains had washed a large portion of the riverbank away about two miles to the north, creating a wide, shallow crossing which cavalry could ford. I hardly needed to recommend a course of action in the light of this opportunity. The Countess immediately ordered the cavalry, including the Order of the Black Rose, to cross the river at this point,' wrote Lord Helmut Weisser. Otilia did well to take advantage of this stroke of luck.

It is imperative for a general to take advantage of opportunities such as this. As the eminent and worthy historian Wilhelm Bleek said of me in his outstanding work *The Genius of General von Vincke*, 'a general of worth is constantly sighting out for any advantage he can gain over the enemy, and few were better than von Vincke in this respect.' Bleek's book is excellent, and goes some way to demonstrate my prowess in the field of battle.

Meanwhile, Otilia's infantry, with implacable courage under fire, had got to grips with the enemy. Otilia committed her entire infantry strength to cross the river. She knew that brute force was needed to push Stirland's army back far enough for her men to get a foothold on the eastern bank.

She could not have wished for a more stalwart effort from her men. They clambered over the bodies of their comrades and hurled themselves into the wavering Stirland spearwall. The tightly packed streets were no place for cavalry and the unsupported Stirland infantry were slowly pushed back by the numerically superior Talabeclanders' furious assault.

What followed was a type of fighting few had experienced before. As the infantry blocks broke up into the streets and alleys, the fighting spread across the whole village. Handgunners took up positions in windows and alcoves, crossbowmen fired from high places and men fought desperately from house to house, room to room. They scrambled up stairs, fought in kitchens, set fire to roofs, slipped on blood, stabbed, strangled and died. Regiments lost cohesion and men fought one on one. There were no shieldwalls to hide behind, no battle formations and no clever manoeuvres. It was brutal, primal combat and it lasted several hours.

As more Talabeclanders crossed the river, numbers began to tell and Stirland's men were pushed from the village into the fields beyond. Stirland looked on in horror as he saw his men slowly, agonisingly forced from their positions by the rampant Talabeclanders, led by Lord Weisser.

However, now the infantry were moving into open ground, Stirland could use his cavalry. He naturally assumed Otilia's mounted companies were marooned on the other side of the river, and he sent his heavy cavalry charging into the advancing Talabeclanders. The exhausted infantry were thrown back to the village under the onslaught, allowing Stirland time to regroup his shaken army.

Sensing the tide was turning his way, he ordered his men to advance, with cavalry support on the flanks, to push the Talabeclanders back into the river. It seemed that even at this late stage in the proceedings, Stirland still did not realise he was facing the entire Talabecland army, and did not think to contact his diversionary force to see what the situation was. What's more, Otilia and her knights were closing on his right.

The High Priest of Ulric was an ever-dependable ally of the Countess.

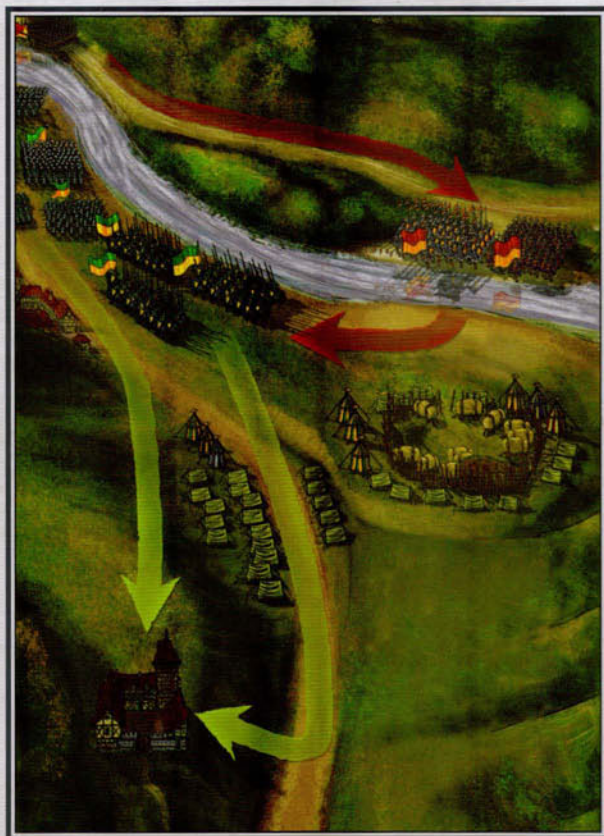
SKIRMISH IN THE MARSH. At midday, as Otilia's infantry were fighting on the streets of Zweihäfen, Captain Lieber reached a swamp which separated him from Stirland's diversionary force. The rain that fell throughout the night had turned the ground into a quagmire and his men struggled to make headway.

In the centre of the swamp, where the brackish water was deepest, the land was infested with thick brambles and thickets of trees and shrubs. On the other side, the diversionary force had their own problems. They were without specific orders and were desperate to get to grips with the enemy, who they could hear but not see. The infantry tried to cut through while the cavalry headed east to find a way around. As the battle was decided several miles behind them, half of Stirland's army wasted its time trying to cross an impassable obstacle to reach a token force only two thousand strong.

Hindsight does not cast Stirland's strategy in a kind light. Blunders such as this can ruin a man's career, as he will be forever tainted with it. I was fortunate never to have made such a hash of a battle, that fiasco in Tilea notwithstanding; and there I was hampered with freak rainstorms and several mercenary companies who switched sides during the battle. But I digress...

FLANK AND ROUT. Just as it seemed that Stirland's men were beginning to get the better of the Talabeclanders, Otilia appeared leading her cavalry. They thundered along the river road, four hundred knights with light cavalry screening their left.

Otilia outflanks the Stirland army and delivers a crushing flank charge, breaking the army.



'Stirland looked agog at the approaching menace. He had no reserves to deal with this new threat; they were foundering in the mud several miles away. In my master's face I saw our defeat,' wrote Marshall Albrecht, Master of the Stirland Horse.

With a cry of defiance, Otilia fell on the Stirland rear. Only the courageous Knights of Sigmar's Blood put up any resistance; but they were tired from fighting the infantry, and the Order of the Black Rose, led by their inspiring leader who vigorously set about herself with her mace, ran them into the ground. The flower of Stirland's army was destroyed and his infantry wide open to the predation of the Otilia's cavalry.

Too late, Stirland realised his mistake. He sent a scout to send for his diversion force, but the battle was as good as lost. With howls of triumph, the Talabeclanders hurled themselves at the fleeing enemy. Seeing his army disintegrate before his eyes, Stirland ignominiously fled the field. The thousands left behind headed east after him, but without horses they could not outrun the cavalry. They retreated to a hill to wait for the end, many seeking refuge in a walled farm at the summit. Their dreams of victory were replaced with the sad desire to go down at the last, fighting bravely.

Stirland's diversion force, on hearing the news of the destruction of their army and the retreat of their leader sued for surrender, which Otilia accepted. Not wishing to continue the bloodshed, Otilia then herself rode to the walled farm to persuade the men there to surrender, with a promise that, should they lay down their arms, they would be free to go back to their homes unharmed. This they did, and Otilia earned the hearts and gratitude of every man there.

The day was won. I have the greatest respect for the Countess and her skills as a general, for with tremendous guile and quick thinking, acting on opportunities as they arose and fighting with supreme courage, Otilia won a great victory against a larger army.

Talabheim Today

Talabheim is a unique city and a great bastion in the Empire of men. This bustling, busy place is built inside a huge crater. I have visited Talabheim many times on my travels, and had occasion to fight alongside its state army, who were stalwart and proud of their home and city.

From outside the crater walls, known as the Taalbaston, it is quite clear that any invading army will have terrible difficulty in assaulting the city. The natural mountainous walls of the crater rise far from the ground and over the years, the city's defenders have added defensive structures to the top. Overlooking the vast forest which spreads out from the city are watch posts, connected by a narrow road which runs the entire length of the crater's rim, known as the Spierrestrasse. Anyone approaching the city can be seen many miles away from these permanently manned fortifications.

These watch posts, called 'lashes', are equipped with cannons and ballistae and have a clear field of fire over the inside and outside of the crater walls. This mixture of natural and manmade defences makes the city virtually impregnable.

After travelling the Old Forest Road and the crater walls cast their shadow over you, the only way is up, along a looping road which climbs the steep walls of the Taalbaston known as the Wizard's Way. The road is wide to accommodate the volume of traffic, but any approaching army has to advance under the guns and loopholes of the High Watch fortress that provides the only entrance into the crater.

If any men survive to the top of the Wizard's Way, they are faced with four portcullises, dozens of murder holes and a long tunnel lined with more shooting platforms and holes in the ceiling through which boiling pitch can be poured onto their heads. In the unlikely event that they make it this far, an invader then has to traverse more switchbacks on the road which runs down the inside of the crater and into the city.

Not only is the city protected by the crater walls, the wide and fast-flowing river Talabec winds its way around the north face of the natural bastion, making it all but impossible to assault from that direction. It also means that during a siege, the city can be supplied by river, as long as the defenders keep hold of the docks to the west.

The impregnability of Talabheim has caused some scholars to ask why Otilia left it to march out on Stirland at the Battle of the Talabec. The reason she did this is quite simple: she had to in order to stay in contention for the Emperor's throne.



A less courageous leader would indeed have stayed safely ensconced within Talabheim's impenetrable walls. But in doing so, he would have forfeited any chance of gaining leadership of the Empire. Who would follow a leader who hides as his enemies run rampant over his state, causing untold woe and lamentation to his people?

Otilia had to meet Stirland in open battle and defeat him, thus proving that she could defeat her enemies anywhere. No one can rule a land if they are not free to roam it at will. If she had stayed in Talabheim, she would have lost. As it was, she won a famous victory and secured her claim to the throne.

Of course, retaining such a sturdy bastion was vital to her plan, as it gave her an unassailable position where she could gather her forces and play politics, safe from the predations of her enemies, but also confident that she could give a nasty bite if coaxed out to battle.

CONCLUSION AND LEGACY. Though victorious, Otilia was not recognised as Empress though as a result of the battle she enjoyed support from many quarters. Constant civil strife continued in the Empire for many hundreds of years to follow. It is a sad fact that in this period of our history, it was not uncommon for armies of men to fight each other. Imagine the gaudy ranks of spearmen and cantering knights, banners fluttering and drums rolling, not facing orcs or the dark enemies from the north, but rather fellow men of the Empire! It seems unthinkable.

The Battle of the Talabec was one of the largest set-tos of the civil war and set a benchmark for future conflicts. Rival

factions to the Emperor's throne took heart from the outcome, and realised that with enough courage and men, anyone could stake their claim. 'Others would follow where one hero feared not to tread,' as the great historian Adolpheus Dreiter aptly put it at the time.

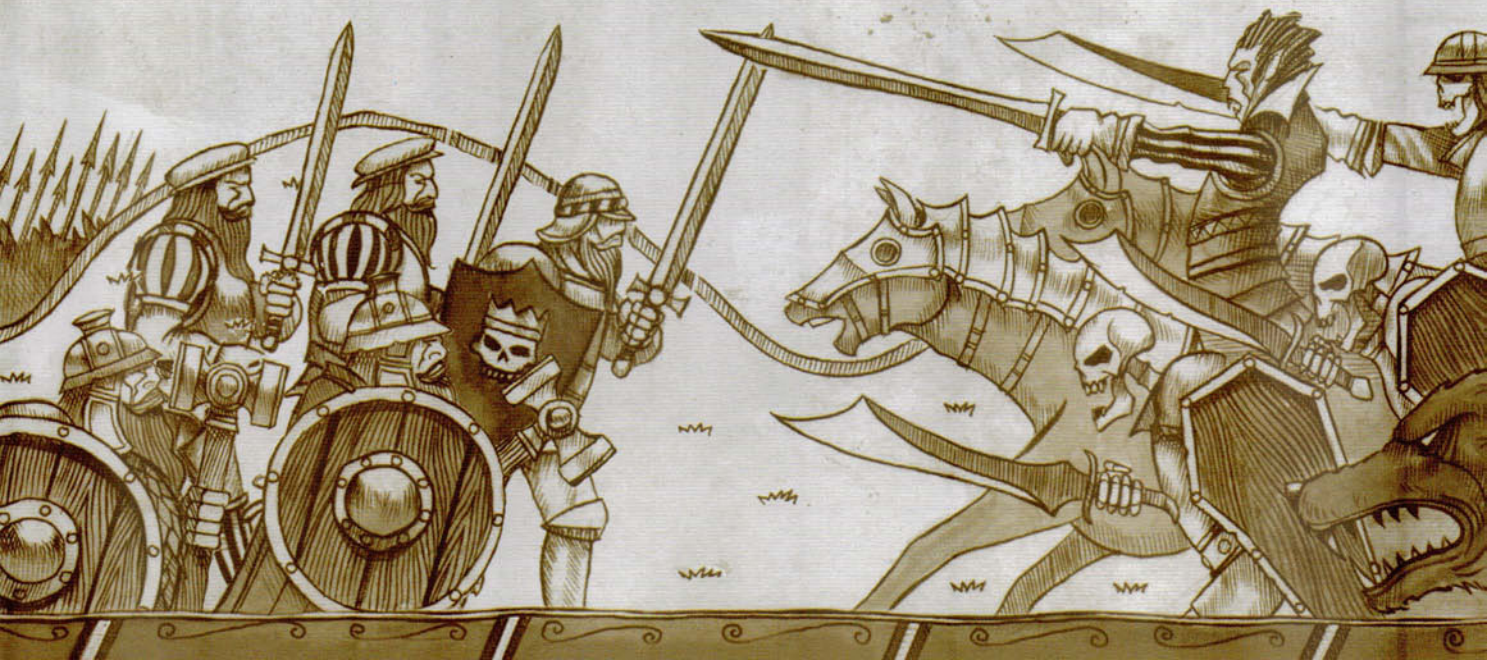
Stirland's reign as Emperor after this debacle was short-lived. His allies abandoned him, not wishing to be associated with such a weak military strategist. The throne was as good as vacant, and anyone with a claim wasted no time in staking it. The fields of the Empire soaked up much blood as rivalries festered and armies clashed. The brilliant victory at the Talabec spawned from the guile and opportunism of Otilia ushered in a new era of civil war and discontent: a sad legacy for such a famous battle.

Envelopment

The Battle of Hel Fenn

‘Our skirmishers fell back before the undead assault, casting aside their weapons and shrieking in fear. Mannfred von Carstein’s skeletal horrors followed relentlessly, bony fingers clicked as they gripped tightly their spears. On they marched towards us, the Forlorn Hope, skulls grinning in the twilight. But the Count of Stirland was cunning, and the jaws of his trap were about to spring.’

– Kurt Vanhlem, Stirland
crossbowman



Envelopment

VAMPIRE HUNT. The Battle of Hel Fenn was a famous victory for the Empire and saw the end of Mannfred von Carstein's reign of terror. Yet the battle was closely fought, and the unthinkable could well have happened if not for the tactical brilliance of the Count of Stirland and the stout hearts of his soldiers.

Mannfred von Carstein, the last in that cursed line of vampires, had shown himself to be a formidable foe in the Winter War of 2132, when he cut a swathe across the Empire and attacked Altdorf and Marienburg in turn. He was driven back to Sylvania only by a combined force of men and dwarfs.

As is was, the tactical and strategic brilliance of Count Martin of Stirland won the day at Hel Fenn, in 2145, and provided scholars of war with the perfect example of the envelopment manoeuvre to study. This battle is taught in all military schools, and it is every worthy general's dream to be able to carry out this classic battlefield tactic with the same bravura, courage and skill that Stirland did on that fateful day in Sylvania.

After Mannfred's devastating attack on the Empire had been turned back, first at Altdorf, where the Grand Theogonist himself recited the great Rite of Unbinding, threatening to banish Mannfred's army wholesale, then at Marienburg, there then began a game of cat and mouse in which the vampire was hounded all the way to Sylvania.

I campaigned there on several occasions when undead armies were conjured by necromancers. It is not a place I would wish to go to again. The idea that the men we buried there after the battles could be raised again to fight their living counterparts is a grim one. Sylvania is an inhospitable and desolate land of jagged mountains, bleak plains and rotten soil covered in dense pine forests. Dark things live there, and the dead stir.

Stirland was in overall command of the joint armies but he was a diplomat, and sought the council of the other Elector Counts and dwarfs on all important matters. He knew that his biggest strength was unity of forces (see the



The dread Mannfred von Carstein was to be the most nefarious of all the vampire counts of Sylvania.

Battle of Black Fire Pass), and he made sure he maintained it. Few believed that Mannfred could muster much resistance after his defeat and it was imperative that he be pursued so the allies could end his threat, once and for all.

After numerous battles, in which it seemed neither side ever had the upper hand in the broader context of the war, Mannfred was driven back into the Sylvanian forests. Then began the long and laborious process of scouring the woods for the vampire and his foul army of the restless dead. After weeks of fruitless searching, Mannfred was finally brought to battle at Hel Fenn. As he emerged from the trees, Stirland saw an open plain sloping up to a ridge, then down towards the forest. They rode up the ridge, and this is how the count described what he saw:

'We rode into the open plain at Hel Fenn and our eyes were drawn across the plain. Fog drifted through the twisted trees before us, moving sluggishly on the breeze that came from the stinking swamp. The sun was low and the light fading so at first we thought our eyes were playing tricks: it looked as if the trees were moving!

'But it was not the trees that moved. From out of the forest marched the undead. My horse shied and a thrill of fear ran up my spine. I caught the stench of rotting flesh. More poured out from the forest, endless columns of perambulating skeletons, loping wolves and the sky became black as a flock of fell bats converged in swirling clouds. And then, we saw him, just a distant smear in the dusk's light, but his outline was unmistakable: Mannfred von Carstein. He threw his arms into the air and lightning trembled and flashed around him. We looked aghast at the size of his army.

"Send word to our allies," I said. "We need their assistance with all the haste they can muster. The vampire has found new strength and has been waiting for us."



Map depicting the region of Sylvania in which the battle of Hel Fenn was fought.

Gothard, the Undying Knight, grim leader of Mannfred's Black Knights.

THE UNDEAD HOST. The armies of the undead are unlike others. I have faced them many times and they exact a fear-grip on men's hearts in a way that no other enemy can. Men are more prone to fear when facing a host of the walking dead, and fear is a soldier's worst enemy. Happily for Stirland, his army had been fighting Mannfred's host for over a year during his invasion of the Empire and were steeled against its debilitating effects.

Mannfred's host had been soundly beaten several times in his retreat from the Empire, and he had lost many of his vampire allies. However, he had created a vast army of skeletons, ghouls, zombies, wights and peasants still loyal to him.

Approximations of the size of his army range from twenty thousand to three hundred thousand. The reality is probably between those figures. Mannfred was accompanied by two of his most trusted lieutenants, the necromancer Adolphus Krieger and the wight lord, Gothard, known as the Undying Knight.

What we can be sure of is that Stirland's hardy army was greatly outnumbered, and he knew that his fate would be decided by whether his allies could reach him in time. Stirland and his subalterns watched with growing concern as more and more of Mannfred's warriors shuffled, glided, marched and slunk their way out of the forest and began to form up into regiments in complete silence; no order was shouted, no trumpet bayed.

Fear is a weapon that should be used by every general: if one enemy formation routs, others are likely to follow suit. But undead hosts do not know fear, and they never flee a battle. This fact would have been foremost in Stirland's mind as he watched Mannfred's host materialise.



'That revolting aberration Mannfred was ordering his host forward and using his devious magic to give his zombies and skeletons animation. He was the thread that kept his unholy host together. I prayed to Sigmar that my allies would arrive by morning, when the first attack was sure to fall,' wrote Stirland.

Sylvanian Peasant Levies

When one thinks of armies commanded by the foul vampire counts in Sylvania, what springs immediately to mind are shuffling zombies, slaving ghouls and mindless skeletons. However, there is another group of creatures that invariably follows in the wake of their vampire masters, one that defies the logic of good: Sigmar-fearing men: the living.

What man would willingly march to war under the banners of the undead? And why do the counts tolerate these warm-blooded folk and induct them into their otherwise rotting and fleshless ranks?

It is hard to understand either of these questions, and I will never be able to fully come to terms with the answers, but there are reasons why these people fight for their undead masters. It is important to remember that Sylvania is unlike any of the other states of the Empire, and so are the people who live there.

Sylvania is a land ruled by the dead. For the living unfortunate enough to exist there, they live ever in the thrall of the vampire overlords who suck them of the will to fight with fear and high taxes. The men of Sylvania fight for their cruel masters because they fear them. They have been beaten down by years of drudgery and poverty, and the ever-present threat of death and rebirth as a flesh-craving zombie or skeleton. Fear can drive a man to do many things, and few entities are as effective as causing fear than the vampire counts of Sylvania.

The peasant levies raised to fight with the undead armies are not professional fighters and are rarely armed and trained well. They are not expected to put up much of a fight; but they may slow down an attack long enough for more effective forces to be brought to bear.

The peasant levies are sometimes provided with equipment by their masters, but will more usually arm themselves and then add to

their accoutrements from the bodies of the fallen. Verily they can be found to be armed with spears, staves, pikes, axes, hammers, scythes, reapers and occasionally hunting bows and crossbows.

Their everyday life of privation and fear gives Sylvanian peasants an unhealthy pallor, pale and wan. In fact, many have suggested that where their comrades are undead, the peasants are the half-dead, their lives glimmering dimly in a black sea of misery, waiting with petrified patience for the inevitable end when they will truly become the slaves of the vampires.

However, they are not to be underestimated in battle. Their fear of their masters ensures they fight with fervency and desperation, knowing that any failure on their part will result in them or their family being horribly punished.

The vampire counts use the peasant levies in their armies because they are numerous, as easily-controllable as their zombies and skeletons yet capable of independent thought which may give them an edge in battle. They can be used to soak up missile fire and generally bolster the ranks – and of course when they die, they can always be re-animated...

It is hard for us mortals to comprehend why these people rise up to fight on behalf of the undead. But to them, the vampire counts are their legitimate lords and masters who must be obeyed. They are infected with a twisted sense of loyalty and a misplaced desire to protect their homeland from any invader.

I make no excuses for their conduct, and I have no compunction to show them mercy in battle. However, it is important to understand why they act like they do, and pity them for their desperate lot in life. Bringing death to them in battle is doubtless a release from a much worse fate.



Envelopment

Axelbrand, Archlector of Taal.

DEPLOYMENT. In the dying light, Stirland deployed his forces for battle. He held a comparatively strong position. To his back was the forest, and his forces were ranged on a hill, the bottom of which was sheltered by a raised track running across the army's front. His right flank was anchored by an abandoned fort, and the left by a walled farm and thick forest.

On top of the hill, named Thunder Ridge by the gun crews, Stirland positioned his artillery. From this vantage point, his great cannons and mortars could sight and fire on any enemy approaching the Empire front. To ensure Mannfred was forced to do this, Stirland took great care in protecting his flanks.

Amongst his forces, Stirland also had a number of priests of Taal, and Axelbrand, Archlector of Taal to whom he had petitioned for aid. He knew Mannfred was a potent and dangerous sorcerer and the blessings of the priests would be vital in countering his magics.

Far right. Another artistic depiction of Mannfred von Carstein. In this rendition, he is Mannfred the necromancer, rather than Mannfred the warrior.

Stirland manned the fort and the walled farm with elements of his elite infantry, the Ostland Black Guard. He knew Mannfred would have to take those buildings if he wanted to use his superior numbers to envelop his army and it was imperative to make him pay a high price to do this. The bulk of his army he kept out of sight behind the ridge, and he placed forward elements of huntsmen and free companies in front of the road. 'A tasty morsel to tempt a beast,' Stirland said.

Stirland needed Mannfred to attack him. His position was strong in defence, but he did not have the muscle to go on the offensive against the undead host. He wanted to draw Mannfred forward, where he could hold out against



the initial attacks until his allies arrived, when the balance would tip in his favour. Stirland knew Mannfred, and to beat an enemy, you have to understand him.

Mannfred had good reason to be confident. The Empire army facing him was not large and the dwarfs were still some distance away. He knew if the allied forces converged, he would be harder pressed to beat them, so he planned to keep them apart, and deal with each army separately. This was a sound strategy, and if carried out properly would surely have seen the defeat of the allies. Dawn broke cold and grey and the armies formed up into regiments.

The Battle of Hel Fenn was about to begin.

The Black Knights of Mannfred von Carstein – the vampire lord's shock cavalry.





Ostland Black Guard

The Ostland Black Guard is a stalwart and highly experienced regiment. Their exploits have earned them fame throughout their native state and beyond. With such a fierce reputation, numerous deeds of honour and courage providing the narrative to their long history, it is little wonder these warriors have fought in countless campaigns for many different electors.

The Black Guard regiment is stationed in the city of Wolfenburg. Soldiers of promise from other, less prestigious regiments are inducted into the ranks of the Black Guard purely on the basis of merit. A candidate must have proved himself to be not only a great fighter, but also to be a man with a stalwart soul and an impervious courage in the heat of battle. Only then is he judged worthy to be put forward for consideration.

It is a matter of honour to join their ranks, but high social status or powerful friends will in no way grease a man's passage into the Ostland Black Guard. It is for this reason that they remain such a potent fighting force; every man has earned his place with hard work and proven deeds of courage.

The Black Guard are an infantry regiment paid for by the state and kept at full fighting strength of some five hundred men as part of the permanent standing army. These men are professional soldiers, hard of heart and fighters to the bone.

Being noticed, recommended by an officer and inducted into the ranks is only the first step on the long road to becoming a Black Guard. The training regime is punishing, and only three men in ten lasts the distance to become a ranker. Most are sent back to their former regiments, chastened and more in awe of the Black Guard than ever before. For those that prove themselves worthy, they are privileged to be part of one of Ostland's most famous regiments.

A Brutal and Effective Weapon

The Black Guard are trained to a high standard on all bladed weapons, but they ultimately learn how to wield the hardest weapon to master of them all: the greatsword. The greatsword, also known as the *zwei-hander*, is a two-handed weapon, roughly the height of a man. It is extremely difficult to use and it takes large measures of skill, strength and discipline to do so effectively.

Although the blades are made by the finest weapon-smiths in the state to ensure that they are as supple, strong and light as they can be, they are heavy weapons and it is perilously easy for a man to lose control, especially after a hefty swing at a nimble enemy!

Every state in the Empire has its greatswords, those elite warriors at the right hand of an elector count, second only to his knights. Their finely wrought blades are truly things of beauty, decorated with ornate filigree depicting the icons of their state or province; for Talabheim a golden lion, the Hochland greatswords use a hawk or other bird of prey and the Ostland Black Guard have a bull's head. Each weapon is also inscribed with rubrics and catechisms to bolster a warrior's faith or resolve in battle.

The men of the Ostland Black Guard train every day when not on campaign: sparring and fencing, perfecting their technique in readiness for the battles to come.

It is hard for a layman to understand how the greatsword can be used in battle. It appears so huge, heavy and unwieldy; indeed it is all of those things in the hands of one not trained to use it. But in the assured grip of a Black Guard, it is a deadly and potent sword, unmatched by any other bladed weapon in its power to incapacitate and kill.

Called the Black Guard for the colour of their lacquered plate-mail armour and leather hauberts, this grim honorific is also derived from their taciturn demeanour and their strong adherence to



the credos of Morr. Indeed, before every battle, a priest of the God of Death and Dreams blesses each and every member of the regiment, their heads bowed in solemn genuflection. Each man also carries a pouch with two silver pieces, the belief that if they fall in battle this offering will ensure they are embraced by the arms of Morr in his garden and not subjected to the predations of daemons and necromancers.

I have seen these men in battle against the beastmen hordes of the Great Forest, a fearsome and deadly sight. The centre of the thin Empire line was held by the Black Guard. Led by a frothing, muscled chieftain, sweat glistening upon their stinking bodies, the abominations of Chaos hurled themselves baying and screaming at the Ostlanders, hoping to break through and split the army in twain.

Most infantry regiments stand close together with the aim of keeping the enemy at bay and not letting him through the line. The greatswords have the same aim, but they carry it out in a different manner. Because of the length of the greatsword and the mode of its use – swinging the blade in wide circles around the body, aiming for limbs and heads – it requires a lot of room around each individual soldier to ensure that they do not harm their comrades.

This individualistic method of war harks back to the days of Sigmar, when men were judged on their acts of sole heroism in battle, and coordinated attacks in disciplined ranks were unheard of. In battle, a Black Guard stands alone against the enemy, entrusted with his section of the line that he must defend at all costs, armed only with a greatsword, skill and undimmed courage in the face of overwhelming odds.

It must have looked like a very vulnerable part of the line to the beastmen – though I seriously doubt the debased creatures possessed the tactical acumen to be wholly aware of this – in that great battle: the Black Guards standing several feet apart from each other, a few ranks deep, leaning on their huge weapons. No wonder the stinking brutes fell on them with gleeful savagery. It was to prove their undoing.

The Black Guard whirled and swept their weapons around them with unerring accuracy. The long reach of the greatsword with the wielder's arms at full stretch meant that the beastmen could not close on them to inflict a blow; entering into the killing zone around the Black Guard was the surest way to lose a limb. The beastmen army broke on them. It was like watching butchers slaughter

Strategy and Tactics

There is an old saying: even the best laid plans must make way for the enemy. In other words, dogmatic generals are bound to fail. Numerical superiority or advanced technology is no defence if the mind wielding them is disinclined to alter his plans in the face of the enemy's own strategy. Cunning generals will always seek to exploit an inflexibly minded adversary.

A good general must be able to assess a situation, judge the movements of the enemy swiftly and decisively and adapt his tactics to meet changes and dangers as they occur. He must be a master strategist and a master tactician. It is important to understand the distinction between strategy and tactics.

A strategy must be planned before the battle; it is a broad plan of attack which instructs the progress of the campaign or battle. Tactics are the manoeuvres and decisions made (small or large; every decision is significant) during the conflict to put the grand strategy into action and ensure its success. Mastery of these arts is essential for a successful general.

sheep. The Black Guard were a murderous miasmic machine, shredding every beastmen that tried to attack them, humbling the enemy with their brutal skill and courage.

The Black Guard tread a fine line in battle. If they miss their footing or their grip on the hilt, or lose control of the sword they can struggle to keep their balance and fall, allowing the enemy time to close in and inflict a kill. The Black Guard's survival is ensured by well-aimed and controlled blows; their weapons are not designed for feints and parrys, they must strike quickly to wound or kill.

The Black Guard at Hel Fenn

It was not without good reason that Striland put contingents of the Black Guard on the flanks of his line when he made ready to face Mannfred von Carstein's army of the restless dead. It was imperative that he protected his army from a flanking attack, and he knew that the Black Guard were the best-equipped soldiers at his command to do that. Led by Vladamir Ludennacht, the champion of the Elector Count of Ostland, and emissary on his behalf to Elector Count Martin of Striland, these warriors were to prove the match of any undead horror unleashed to face them.

Aside from their fierce professionalism which forbids them to bow down before any enemy, no matter how numerous or powerful, the weapons of the Ostland Black Guard are extremely potent against the forces of the undead.

Undead warriors differ greatly from living foes and blows that would kill or incapacitate such an enemy would do little to hinder these creatures, let alone vanquish them. They do not bleed and have no vitals to wreck; the undead must to be hacked to pieces and destroyed in order to stop them.

And this is where the Black Guard's greatsword comes into its own. It is a slashing weapon, and delivers blows with such power that limbs can be severed with relative ease. At Hel Fenn, the Black Guard aimed to sever heads and cut through torsos, thus incapacitating their adversaries as quickly as possible. The plan worked with such success that they held off vast hordes of zombies and skeletons for the duration of the battle, thus ensuring that the army's flanks were secure.

Every soldier in the Ostland Black Guard who fought at Hel Fenn received (many posthumously) the Order of the Thorny Rose, a prestigious military award unique to Striland. It is a fitting reward to this famous regiment of men that they gained such an honour, for without them the borders of the Empire are surely less firmly held.





In the war tent of Elector Count Martin of Stirland, the generals draw their plan to bring Mannfred and his army low.

The tactics here are quite simple and have three key elements:

The thin Empire battle line (1) draws an over-confident Mannfred forward (2). The line is anchored at one end by a fort and a walled farm at the other.

The dwarfs take the left flank (3) – a tempting target for Mannfred as he attempts to split the allied army into two.

The Count of Stirland keeps the cream of his army hidden behind the ridge (4).



MANNFRED'S FORAY. 'The odds were so stacked against us that I feared for us all. Yet Martin was calm throughout, observing the battle from his horse and issuing crucial orders as if instructing his palace servants on the day's cleaning duties. He told me afterwards that fear gnawed at his heart all that day. I would never have believed it,' wrote Lord General Kristian Heff.

As Stirland predicted, Mannfred's first attack was against the fort on his right flank. Skeleton riders charged the battered walls, and a vast regiment of skeleton infantry followed up behind. The Black Guard stood in tight ranks behind the ruined fort walls, brandishing their greatswords as handgunners on the ramparts poured down fire, using shrapnel shot which shattered and splintered bone. Soon, the fort was consumed in the tumult of battle: smoke billowed, bones broke, men roared their defiance, lances shivered and split. Again and again the undead cavalry tried to break through the Black Guard line, but they were thrown back each time. The stubbornness of the greatswords is well-known and the Ostland Black Guards were no exception. The fort was to remain contested for many more hours.

At nine o'clock, scouts reported to Stirland that the dwarfs had marched all through the night and the forward elements, rangers, were arriving in the woods on the left flank. They sent their regards, and pledged to hold the left flank against the enemy 'until every shambling, rotten, undead piece of filth was dead, again'. Stirland was greatly heartened by the news, for his left flank was a weak spot and skirmishers had reported that Mannfred was deploying a large force in readiness to attack the farm. The arrival of the dwarfs was a blow to Mannfred, but he did not alter his plan. The dwarfs were forming up some way from the Empire army, using the trees as cover; Mannfred could still split the allied army by driving a wedge between them. First he had to wrestle the farm from the Black Guard.

As Mannfred's army slowly advanced across the plain, hoping to draw the Empire army out of its position, swift units of dire wolves, skeleton chariots and peasant archers closed on the walled farm and the hastily deploying dwarfs in an effort to knock them back and allow Mannfred to swarm around onto the Empire left.

Stirland was content to wait. He carefully watched the battles raging around his flank redoubts and inwardly congratulated himself on his strategy. As each attack on the fort and the farm was repelled, Mannfred committed more troops to the attack. Eventually, he used up all his reserves in the vain effort to take those strong places. All Stirland had to do was trickle a steady stream of reinforcements to replace those who fell, just enough to hold the walls. This strategy ensured that Mannfred committed all his forces to the fight, and Stirland still had his reserves to play.

THE CENTRES ENGAGE. Despite this, the allied position was decidedly tenuous. Stirland's flanks were engaged with a numerically superior force, and it would be disastrous if they fell. The undead army moving across the plain was vast. Blocks of skeletons marched in perfect unison, thousands strong, crashing their spears against their shields and making a tremendous din. Zombies shuffled, gnashing their teeth and hundreds of dire wolves slavered behind them. The air above the host was black with bats, blotting out the sun; it was mid-morning, but it was as if dusk had come early. The air thrummed with the beat of wings and the ground shook under marching feet.

Stirland sent orders to the artillery on Thunder Ridge. The men cheered as the great cannons and mortars - cast in the forges of Nuln and given names like Sigmar's Wrath and The Hammer by their crews - roared and kicked, blasting shot at the approaching foe who were so tightly packed and numerous that the gunners could not fail to miss. Clods of mud were thrown into the air as the cannon balls hit the ground and on the bounce battered the undead ranks. They fell like wheat in a hailstorm and gaping holes appeared in their masses.

Stirland could not afford to commit all his army to the fight, as that would give him no room to manoeuvre or counter Mannfred's moves. He sent the front ranks of his army forward to weaken the enemy advance: spearmen regiments with crossbowmen between them to protect their flanks. Empire infantry is the backbone of her armies, and my soldiering career began as a footslogger. As they marched up to the road they were given their first proper look at the enemy in all his terrible strength. They did not falter.

The Empire spearmen ranks were only four deep, and they faced skeleton and zombie regiments in numbers uncountable. They halted on top of the ridge and waited. Their orders were to hold the undead horde for as long as possible, inflicting as much damage as they could. This thin line was dubbed the Forlorn Hope by the men who waited behind them and they were to achieve their goal with more success than Stirland could have hoped for.

The Grave Guard of Mannfred von Carstein.



Envelopment



Artistic impression of the battle at Hel Fenn, in which the forces of the Empire are shown scouring the woods for their quarry, the vampire lord Mannfred von Carstein.

Overleaf. Mannfred and Elector Count Martin clash at the heart of the battle. The breaking dawn almost heralds the vampire lord's doom.





The crossbowmen of Stirland struggle to hold off the tide of zombies threatening to overwhelm them.

THE FORLORN HOPE. The term Forlorn Hope may seem counterproductive to a casual reader; indeed it conjures up the idea that the task involves enormous danger and anyone embarking on such an escapade is surely going to die. While this is true, many men volunteer to take part in such formations and honour is heaped on those who survive. Never could they be accused of being cowards.

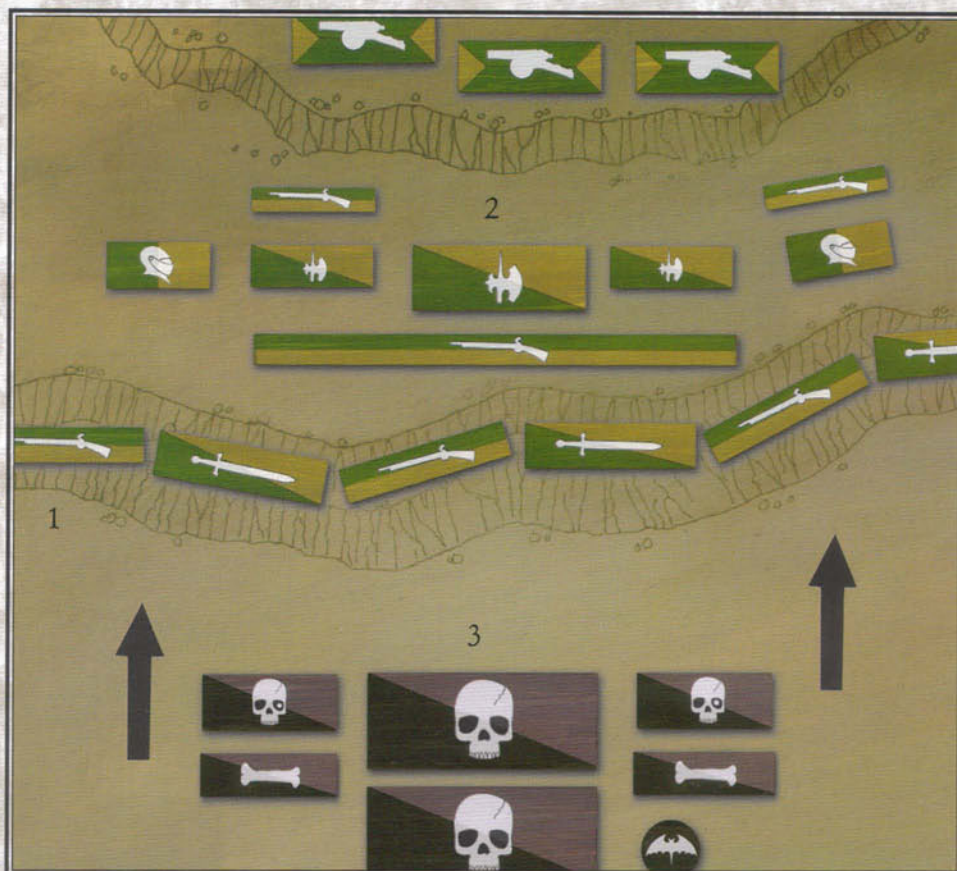
'We were about a quarter of a mile behind the Forlorn Hope. All we saw were their backs, braced with their spears held over their heads and the shoulders of the men in front. First the crossbowmen opened fire, then the archers. Stirland ordered the archers to shoot fire arrows at the bat swarm; they hated fire because fire cleanses. We knew when the undead hit the Forlorn Hope because the line buckled. We saw those men strain every sinew to hold them back. By the gods, how they fought,' wrote Captain Gunther Jenz of the Stirland Spears Regiment.

While the Forlorn Hope held the enemy back, arrows and shot continued to smash into the undead ranks. Men prayed that a cannon ball would pulp Mannfred, who stood in the middle of the throng, controlling his army, forcing the advance, relentless in his confidence of victory.. Mannfred decided to tip the balance, and to Stirland's astonishment, the undead turned and marched away, back across the plain, leaving the Forlorn Hope to cheer their victory.



Only the undead forces attacking the flanks remained, desperately trying to get inside the fort and the walled farm. The retreating regiments marched into columns and halted with wide avenues between them. From the rear appeared Mannfred's cavalry. Black knights with eyes lit with balefire rode undead steeds, their slender spears tipped with rusty iron. The ground shook.

'This bodes ill,' Stirland said. He raised his sword in the air. 'Cavalry!' he cried and the trumpets called the muster. Heavy cavalry advanced from their positions to the rear. Hundreds of knights trotted past the cheering infantry. Stirland was going to counter the attack.



The Forlorn Hope

The Empire front ranks retreat in good order, leading the over-eager undead hordes into a trap envelopment manoeuvre from the fresh Empire troops behind the ridge.

1. Line of troops on the Raised Farm Road.
2. The rest of the army formed up and hidden from sight.
3. Mannfred's army advances by regiment into the Forlorn Hope and into withering missile fire.



THE GLORIOUS CHARGE. Mannfred's cavalry spread out across the plain, their trot increasing to a canter as they advanced on the ridge. He was certain that his cavalry would tear through the Forlorn Hope like an axe through wet parchment. So confident was he that he had the numbers to crush Stirland's army, he neglected to gather any information on the strength and composition of the enemy he faced. This was a grave mistake.

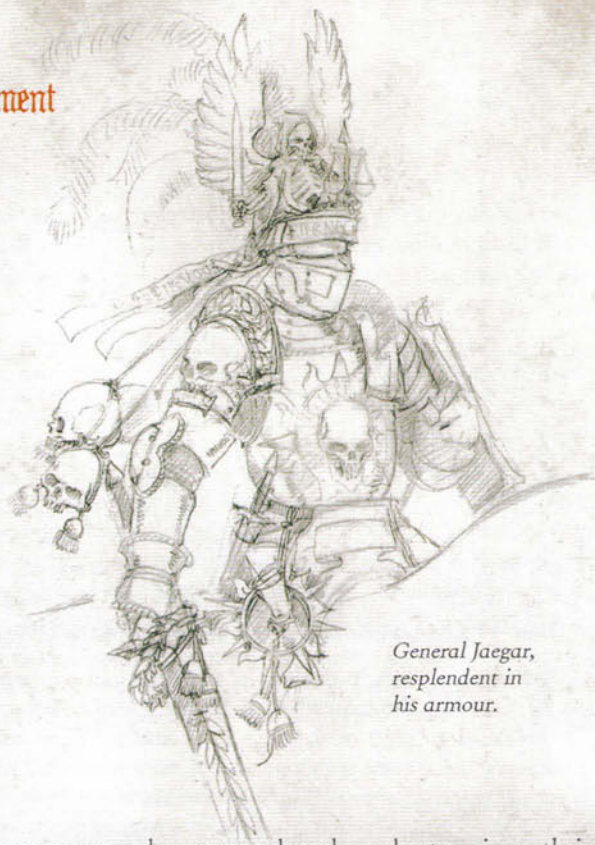
Mannfred may have smiled as he watched the Forlorn Hope retreat from the ridge. Now his cavalry could ride them down as they retreated, then turn their attention to the dwarfs. But how that smile must have faded when the Empire cavalry hove into view!

The cavalry charge was described by their leader: the impetuous, courageous and foolish General Jaegar, who rode at their front and centre:

'Mannfred's first sighting of us was when we leapt over the ridge. Imagine an enormous wave crashing on a beach, a wave of horses and armour-clad knights, and that is how we seemed; unstoppable and deadly. We were at full pelt, our horses straining, cries of joy on our lips. The battle was on! Several horses stumbled as they landed, throwing their riders onto the ground, but our momentum carried us on. The undead were barely fifty yards from us and still at a trot.

'My heart leapt as I saw Mannfred turn his steed and ride away, leaving his cavalry to its fate, a fate that we delivered with fury. Our wave of steel and courage smashed into the undead and broke them utterly.'

And there it should have ended. The cavalry charge had achieved more than the allies could have hoped, but they should have turned back to the Empire lines, regrouped and made ready for another foray. But General Jaegar, his blood pounding and on a personal quest for glory, continued the charge, chasing the undead cavalry until he was deep inside the undead lines. I made it my business to



General Jaegar, resplendent in his armour.

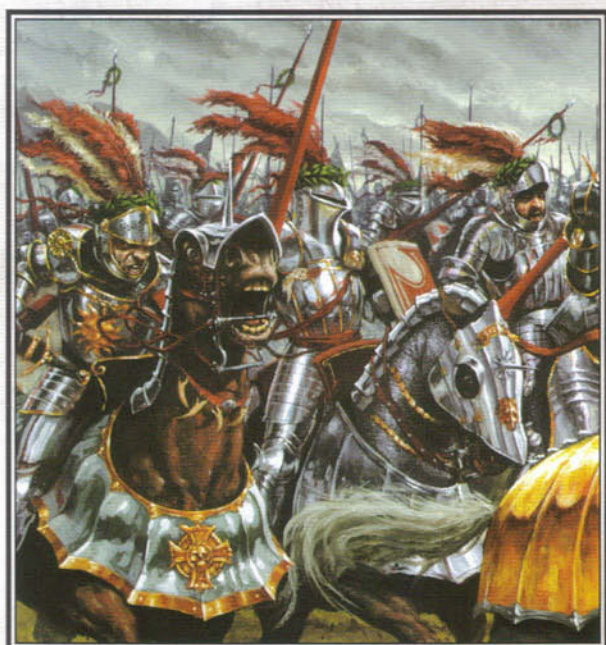
ensure my cavalry commanders always kept a rein on their impulses to charge off into the distance. They are an impetuous breed, and prone to get carried away.

Seeing his chance, Mannfred commanded his infantry to form up into spear blocks and cut off the cavalry's escape. In the middle of the plain, Jaegar realised his mistake. The horses were exhausted and the charge faltered and stopped. Groups of knights bunched together, and the courage that their magnificent charge had forged in their hearts burned low. Mannfred's army closed in, spears lowered, dire wolves prowled closer in packs, hungry for the flesh of horse and man, and the gaps between the undead regiments closed.

Stirland watched with barely suppressed fury as Jaegar tried to rally his troops. The cannons fell silent, not wanting to hit their own men. Jaegar led a charge back to the Empire lines but the soggy ground had been churned into a quagmire, making progress difficult.

Men wept as the flower of the Empire army were forced to engage bristling spear walls. Horses screamed and reared up as spears impaled them. To Jaegar's credit, he fought like a man possessed, hacking a path through a shambling horde of zombies through which other knights could pass, but the damage was done. Barely one hundred knights returned of the six hundred who made up the charge and Jaegar himself was felled by an arrow in the back. His folly had cost Stirland a most potent weapon, and the knights were to play little part in the rest of the battle.

I have a magnificent painting of Jaegar's charge at the undead in my banqueting hall. The painter has no doubt romanticised the image, but it is still powerful in its depiction of one man fighting against terrible odds and facing his death in a worthy manner. Sometimes, when I am alone and I gaze upon it in the fading light of the fire, I regret not being able to end my life in such a way. I fear I am destined to enter Morr's embrace after dying in my bed.



Jaegar's knights committing themselves to the charge in earnest, driven on by the zeal of their leader.

Fighting the Undead

Nothing can fully prepare a man for facing an army of the undead for the first time. They are a foe unlike any other, and the prospect of fighting things dead ignites fear in a man's guts which must be countered by the commanding general. Every living thing is possessed by the instinct to survive; it is an inherent and vital part of what makes us human and the reason why we have survived for so long as a race.

It is for this reason that we feel such dread when faced with the walking dead. When we look into the empty eye sockets of a skeleton, see the blood-flecked, champing jaws of a ghoul or smell the rot of a zombie we are faced with the irrefutable and terrifying spectre of our

own demise, and the awful potential of some evil doer working dark magic and using our mortal coil for his own nefarious ends.

The Power of Fear

Fear is the most potent weapon wielded by undead generals. It can spread like an unholy canker through the ranks, and when it does it can spell the end for the army. There is a famous incident which happened many years ago when an Empire army was dispatched to fight a vast host of the undead in the Drakwald forest. The account, though sketchy in its detail, amply demonstrates the power of fear. Here, I provide the historian's description of the event, one Otto van Kompf of Averheim.

Imperial records show, it was the necromancer, Obadiah Glothman that within the Drakwald forest raised an army of skeletons and zombies. There was not a graveyard within a hundred miles which had not been emptied of corpses. Ghouls poured out of the Howling Hills and the neighbouring populace was migrating in terror westwards before the mighty host of death.

Captain Köller Volpen of Middenheim was tasked with stopping the undead army advancing further into the Imperial heartland but after several sorties with the restless dead fared ill, Volpen was left in dire trouble. With every defeat suffered by the Empire forces, the undead ranks swelled with the resurrected dead.

The Empire expeditionary force, led by Volpen, set up on the west bank of the river Talgarad, a tributary of the Talabec. He wanted to destroy the only bridge, which spanned its breadth, but the undead host was already upon the eastern bank and there was no time to do so. To stop them from crossing, he deployed a regiment of spearmen on the bridgehead. They were a tough regiment from Altdorf, and veterans from many wars against orcs.

Volpen was confident that they would hold the crossing long enough for him to deploy his forces and smash the undead army from afar with his artillery batteries. But fighting orcs did not prepare the spearmen for what they were about to face.

The river was wide, and the far bank was wreathed in early morning mist. The undead army was hardly visible and all the men could see were vague shapes moving in the grey-ness. On the wind drifted muffled sounds: moans and what could have been shrieking laughter, or the ravings of the insane. Whiffs of putrid air came in waves and such was its pungent strength that men felt nauseous.

As Captain Volpen busied himself far from the bridgehead, ensuring his artillery was properly positioned and primed for his first salvo, the undead began their attack. There were no clarion calls, no shouted orders, just the appearance of the first horde on the bridge.

They emerged from the swirling mist like phantoms, seeming to coalesce out of thin air: a living dead nightmare given form on the earth: zombies in legion. As they drew closer the men could see the hideous visage of the enemy. The zombies shuffled towards them, their limb movements

awkward and jerky. Their feet dragged on the wooden bridge, creating a hollow scrape which mingled with the unholy moans and champing sounds which came from their distended, drool-flecked jaws. But while their limbs seemed out of their control, their eyes – black emotionless pits – were not and they stared at the spearmen with dreadful intent.

Some were naked, revealing wasted bodies, pale as fish bellies, and covered in pus-filled buboes and crusted patches of bruise-rot in every shade of green. Fleshless hands gripped weapons which they swung clumsily. They sped up as they closed the gap, the sight of living people inflaming their desire to feed on flesh.

The front lines wavered and as the rotting flesh stink rolled over them many men doubled over to be sick. Without their general nearby to shout encouragement, the men fell victim to their fear. They began to back away, small steps at first, but as they discerned more terrible details of the now rapidly approaching foe, the steps became more hurried. Those in the rear ranks were taken by surprise and stumbled, adding to the growing mayhem.

When one of the men noticed a zombie wearing the tattered uniform of a soldier from Altdorf it proved to be the final straw. All semblance of order was lost, and the spearmen turned tail and ran, shrieking with fear and calling on Sigmar to save them.

With the bridge undefended, the undead ranks passed over the river unmolested to fall on the Empire army as it struggled to form up. Volpen tried to realign his guns to face the new threat, but it was too late and his army was swamped by the necromancer's hordes.

The battle had been won as soon as the spearmen on the bridge fled without a blow being landed in anger. Volpen's fate or how the undead horde was finally laid low is not recorded.



An Ever-Growing Army

An old comrade of mine, a man whose council and stalwartness I will ever value, the warrior priest Ebremanlect, knew much of the undead, his most holy order, the Templars of Sigmar, having sworn to seek out and

destroy such creatures, wherever they might lurk. His advice to me on fighting the restless dead has ever been the boss to my shield of faith. I draw upon his council now, in providing this tactical doctrine.



One of the most disconcerting aspects of fighting the undead is in fact the very means by which the wretched horde is compelled to fight: necromancy. This dark art, through which necromancers wreak their evil, can raise the fallen on the battlefield to fight for him. As the undead host advances, slaying mortals, the necromancer follows in their wake using his dreadful and unwholesome magic to resurrect the dead and turn them on those who were once his colleagues.

To face a comrade in arms, face stove in, guts spilling out and yet walking and fighting, is a daunting prospect. It is not uncommon for soldiers of the Empire to give

pause at such sights, to urge recognition in their erstwhile brothers in arms. Let it be known, though, the cold shrivelled hearts of the undead are unmoved by such entreaties and the living warriors who are fooled by such misplaced compassion will quickly find themselves joining them as a walking corpse.

It must be instilled in the men of the army before the fight begins that they must hold no sentiment for the unfortunate victims of the necromancer's evil. It is hard to strike down a former comrade-in-arms, but it must be done. They are no longer the person they once were, they are merely flesh made mobile and driven with a desire to feed.



Bringing Death to the Dead

When something is already dead, it is very difficult to kill it again. The ranks of the armies of the undead are filled with things in which all life has been extinguished, but still walk and fight and kill.

Any semblance of coherence or independent thinking is an illusion, merely the vestiges of faded memory; zombies and skeletons are husks of thoughtless flesh and bone, made active by the magical influence of powerful individuals: vampire lords or necromancers.

They can be destroyed, though. The principal methods, taken directly from Herr Manleht's journal, I have listed right.

*Ebrem Manleht,
warrior priest
of Sigmar.*



1. Decapitation

A strong blow, guided by faithful conviction that severs the head from the shoulders, thus cleaving the spinal column, can often be enough to kill a creature of the undead and destroy the link between master and puppet.

2. Dismemberment

Destroy the body of the corpse. By removing all of its limbs with a blade or crushing its bones with a mace or hammer, an undead creature can be vanquished. It is strenuous and brutal work, though, not for those without strong stomachs:

3. Faith

By the blessings of Sigmar and Morr can such debased creatures be undone. Holy water, fire or indeed silver can be used to effect the destruction of the undead but only if your faith is unswerving.



Herr Manlecht's doctrine goes further, but suffice it to say, these three methods are of most use to regular soldiery, so I shall not labour further on it!

This all means that for your men, fighting the undead will always be far more troublesome than mortal armies. However, it does mean you hold an advantage. Just as striking the head off a vampire kills it, striking the head off an undead army will do the same. Because the hosts are entirely controlled by an individual, if you kill him the army is ruined: zombies fall to the ground, skeletons turn to grave dust and the beasts like bats and wolves will most likely retreat back to their natural homes, free from the shackles the undead lord had over their bestial natures. At Hel Fenn, the battle was only truly won when Stirland killed Mannfred, for it was then that his army dissipated into nothing.

Take heed. After the battle, the dead must be buried with great care. The slain of both armies should be decapitated and then burnt. Failing that, bury them in lime pits and remember the old adage, 'In the Empire, the dead are always buried face down.'

The Witch Hunter's Handbook, penned by one Kasper von Liebenstein, is widely regarded as a formative text in the matter of destroying the undead, but also offers advice on the slaying of many other enemies of our great Empire. Of little use to the soldier but is none-the-less a source of much valuable lore when dealing with otherworldly forces.



*Knights of
Divine Sw
These bra
warriors
led into b
by the Gr
Theogoni
Kurt III.*

A General's Duty

Fighting an undead host presents generals with unique, demanding but not unsurpassable problems. It is vital to negate the debilitating effects fear can have on your soldiers and there are several ways to do this.

Steel the ranks!

Prepare your men for what they are about to face, especially if they have not encountered such foes before. Ensure they have some notion of what to expect. Forewarned is forearmed, and nothing creates fear in a man like the unknown.

Unite!

Keep your army tight and together. Placing units on their own is dangerous; they will feel vulnerable and unsupported and are more likely to break and run. The men will feel secure if they can see the might of their forces around them.

Embolden!

Foster pride in your men's hearts. Fly banners high, play music loud and ensure your captains constantly urge the men on and remind them for what it is they fight.

Rally!

Stay close to the action. A general in their midst will inspire the men to fight all the harder. Exhort them to deeds of courage, and tell them to have no fear. By



leading by example and with a choice line in rhetoric, you will have a grand effect of your men's moral.

Stirland proved at Hel Fenn that mortal armies can best the forces of the undead, as long as you remember these lessons. Guard against fear, and send the walking dead back to their graves.

Envelopment

THE TRAP IS SET. As the last of the knights returned to the Empire lines, Stirland faced several problems. He had lost much of his knights, the fort on the right flank was reporting that they could not fend off the enemy for much longer, and the undead infantry were once again advancing over the plain.

In reserve, Stirland held a second force of Knights of the Divine Sword, led by the Grand Theogonist himself all the way from Altdorf, and infantry from the state. The knights were keen to engage the foe, particularly the Undying Knight, Gothard, a servant in Mannfred's army, and who had once been a Knight of the Divine Sword until he was slain and brought back to unlife. Stirland ordered a scout to relay orders to this battalion. Engage the undead force on the left with all haste and drive them from the field.

The moment had come to put his plan into practice. His generals were well drilled, and the men knew what was expected of them. Not one of them was unaware of the high risk they were taking, but not one of them failed in their duty.

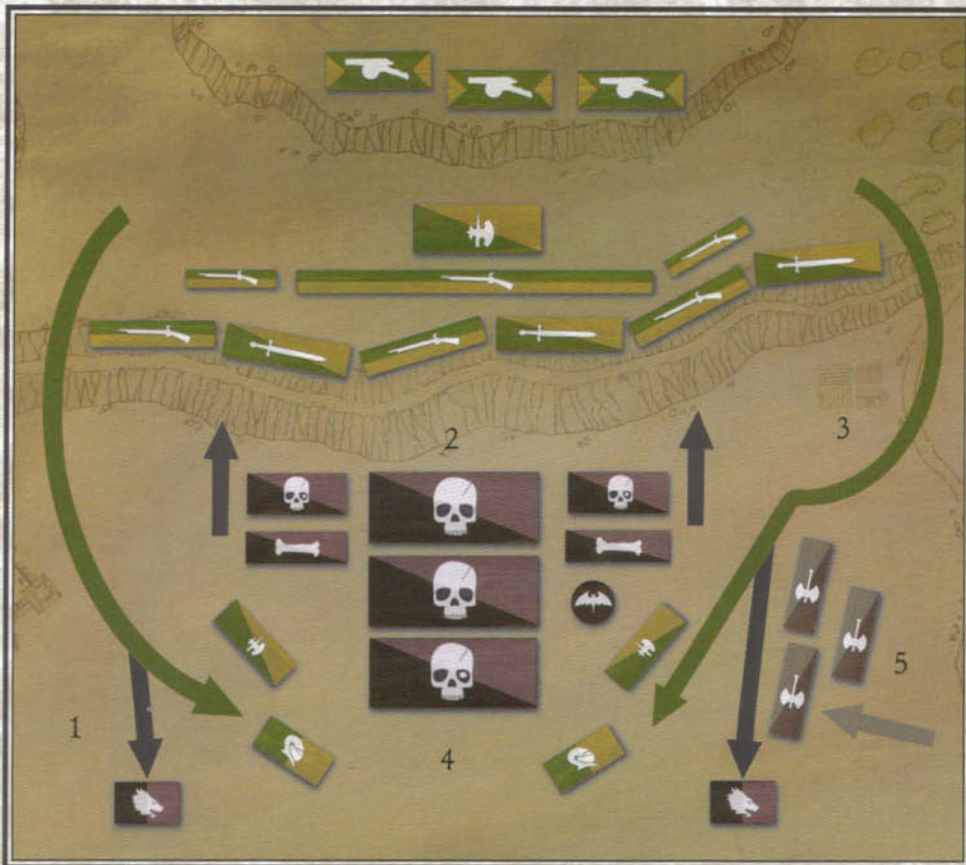
On the ridge, Stirland deployed his infantry, mostly veteran swordsmen and halberdiers. Their task was absolutely crucial, and it required skill, courage and coordination. Stirland placed himself among them and his presence inspired the men and gave them heart. What this thin line of infantry had to do was take the brunt of the undead attack and, as they fought, to retreat, step by step, keeping the line together thus drawing Mannfred's forces forward.

In front of the infantry, Stirland placed skirmishers: archers, crossbowmen and free company militia. Behind the swordsmen and halberdiers, he put another line of infantry: spears and pikes. On the left flank the remaining knights, and on the right the pistoliers, of which there were about a thousand.

Mannfred got wind of the approaching Grand Theonist, the Knights of the Divine Sword and the other Altdorfers, and knew he had to act swiftly before they arrived. He formed his army up into deep regiments, aiming to punch a hole in the enemy line like a hammer, and deal with the troublesome flanks from behind, just as Stirland expected he would.

DOUBLE ENVELOPMENT. The undead infantry advanced, with Mannfred taking up position on the right. On the flanks rode the remnants of the skeleton cavalry and the dire wolves. Stirland ordered his cavalry to engage them with all haste and the knights duly charged into the wolves. A similar fate awaited the skeletons as the pistoliers, fresh and numerous, pounded them into the ground. The Empire horses pursued the remnant of Mannfred's dire wolves from the field, driving them into Shadow Lake.

With this victory, Stirland was growing more confident, but he knew that a workable plan was one thing, carrying it out was quite another. He still had Mannfred's heavy cavalry to deal with, the Black Knights.



Double Envelopment

1. Empire cavalry drives the undead flanks from the field.
2. Undead infantry crash into the Empire lines. The Empire troops retreat in good order and hold firm.
3. As the undead force advances, the Empire forces flank and envelop.
4. Empire cavalry returns and smashes into the undead rear.
5. Dwarf reinforcements arrive and the undead army is destroyed.



'I stepped out from the line intending to rouse my men. As the cannon balls skimmed over our heads and arrows whirled and clattered, I saw the resolve in my men's faces. They needed no speech, no rhetoric. I saluted them all and stepped back into the line,' wrote Stirland after the event.

The undead infantry was almost upon them. The skirmishers fired a desultory volley of missiles and, as ordered, dropped their weapons and ran behind the infantry line, giving every impression of running away. It is important to stress how difficult it is to make men pretend to flee and not instigate an actual rout; it took great courage for Stirland to make the order, and greater courage for the men to carry it out.

The undead infantry ground into the thin line of swordsmen. There was no charge, they did not pick up pace, they merely marched into the Empire line. The pressure was enormous. Men in the rear ranks braced themselves against those in front, their feet sliding, muscles straining. The line held, men held their shields close together and swung their swords, decapitating zombies and shattering skeletons, and then they began to take backward steps. Slowly at first, with Stirland shouting encouragement, the line retreated, seeming to buckle at the centre.

Seeing this apparent weakness in the line, Mannfred ordered more undead to the centre, to increase the pressure there and force a breach. His army bunched up even tighter, and the Empire line started to lap around its edges. The vampire's Black Knights fought ferociously, slaying crossbowmen and halberdiers with seeming impunity.

The undead were drawn in even deeper, over the ridge and into the marshy lowlands. Thunder Ridge loomed over them. The mortars, at the extremes of their elevation, poured shot onto the rearmost echelons of the undead host. Mannfred's eyes were always on the centre of the Empire line, the line that appeared so tantalisingly thin, the line that was retreating and could at any second snap like a thread, allowing his army to pour through and smash the Empire army apart.

Over the tumult of battle, Stirland heard a trumpet. His cavalry were coming! That was the signal. More trumpets took up the call, and the skirmishers and heavy infantry charged from behind the front ranks and fell on the undead flanks. Unable to move, the undead were forced to fight on three sides, and when the Empire cavalry smashed into the rear, there was no escape. Mannfred saw he had been duped by allowing his army to be drawn into a trap.

The final nail in the coffin was driven home by the arrival of the Knights of the Divine Sword. They saw off the undead fighting the dwarfs, and driving their warhorses crashed into the undead right, directly against the Black Knights, followed by the bloodied but defiant dwarfs. What followed was a slaughter, if such a word can be used to describe the slaying on the already dead. The undead were hemmed in from all sides, enduring endless cavalry charges and the ruthless fury of Stirland's infantry. Only Mannfred managed to escape.

He got as far as the marshes around Shadow Lake where Martin of Stirland, after a furious chase, and having defeat-



Elector Count Martin of Stirland. A brave and skilled warrior, it was Martin who finally defeated the von Carstein vampire lord in personal combat at the edge of Shadow Lake.

ed the vampire's wight guardians, struck him down with his Runefang. Stirland was a man of great strength and martial skill, but on any other day Mannfred would have bettered him. But the disgusting vampire was exhausted, the energy expended to control his army had drained him, and his spirit was broken in defeat. His body sank into the ooze and was never found.

The field was Stirland's.

CONCLUSION AND LEGACY. Stirland's victory depended on several factors, some of which were out of his control. If Mannfred's plan to split his forces had worked, or the Empire reserves and dwarfs had not arrived in time, things could well have gone differently. It was a mistake on Stirland's part to push on against von Carstein without his allies. What if Mannfred had not fed as many of his warriors into the meat grinder assaults of the Empire flanks? What if Mannfred had not taken Stirland's bait and walked into his envelopment?

I do not wish to take anything away from Stirland's astonishing and deserved victory, but things could well have gone ill if certain factors had worked out differently. In the end, Stirland's considered risk-taking, sound battle plan and stunningly well-executed envelopment was the perfect counter to Mannfred's over-confidence and questionable decision-making.

Superior numbers are no guarantee of victory. Mannfred used his huge regiments like hammers, attempting to bludgeon his enemies to death by sheer power. He sacrificed any pretence of tactical manoeuvring or shrewd deployment of forces, and in the end he paid the ultimate price. The Empire and the lands of the mortals were made safe from a vicious bloodsucking fiend.

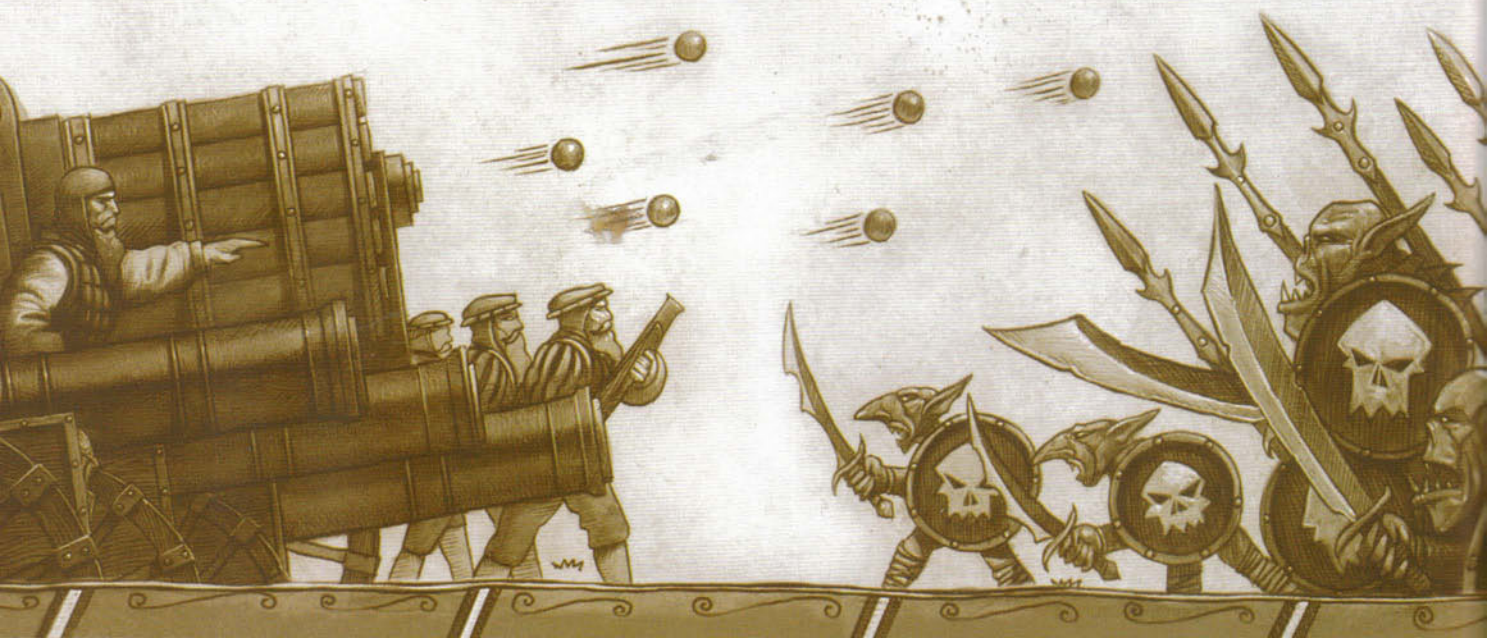
As for Stirland, he was proclaimed a hero and statues were erected in his honour all over the Empire. Stirland assumed rule over Sylvania (uncontested because it was considered he deserved it, and because no one else wanted the responsibility) and remained a respected Elector Count until his death.

Artillery

The Battle of Blood Hollow

'The noise of the cannons was incredible and the sheer power of it heartened us enormously. Smoke burst and fire belched and we felt the breeze over our heads – the breath of death – as the solid shot whistled into the trees ahead, splintering them apart and pulping the orcs who cowered behind them. The enemy was broken and we had yet to even draw our swords.'

– *Anonymous infantryman*



ORCS IN THE HILLS. Do not look for the name of this battle in any books or historical documents, because you will find no reference to it, but it is important to remember that a general can learn lessons from the smallest of encounters, the seemingly most trivial of engagements.

The Battle of Blood Hollow demonstrates perfectly the devastating impact artillery can have on an enemy, if used correctly. This battle is also an example of how a sound strategy can be undermined by misplaced zeal. Ultimately, the blame of a lost battle must always be laid on the shoulders of the general, for it is he who must control and direct his men. The general in charge of this expedition was well rewarded by his guns, the effects of which were devastating, but his reign on his cavalry slipped loose and he was punished for it.

The Middle Mountains have long been a haunt for orcs and goblins, and the people of Hochland have had to cope with the bloody depravations of these degenerate creatures for as long as anyone can remember. I campaigned there several times with some success. I chose lightly armed troops and plenty of skirmishers, huntsmen and local militia to protect the flanks, front and rear of the column.

One spring, folk in the foothills of the Middle Mountains reported more orc attacks on their villages and farms than usual. These attacks were brutal and were getting more numerous as the weeks went by. It seemed as if the greenskins were growing bolder, testing the strength of the enemy and finding it wanting. When word of this reached the ears of Baron Eadric Valkin, Grandmarshall of Hochland's armies, he was initially unconcerned.

Valkin was an aristocrat of the truest blood, a cousin of the elector count and a rather cold, stern man with an inflexible view on military tactics. However, he was aware that the men in his standing army had not seen action for some time, and a sortie against the orcs might be just what they needed.

He petitioned Elector Count Ludenhof, an imperious and formidable man, to approve a military expedition to the Middle Mountains. As it happened, the count was disinclined to send his armies so far north as it would leave the capital undefended. Eventually he agreed, but he made it clear that nothing less than total victory would satisfy him, and Valkin would pay a high personal price if he fell short of the count's demands.

Mustering the army took several weeks, and when it was complete it was unbalanced and unwieldy. Valkin fielded six thousand infantry, the majority being swordsmen, and ten thousand missile troops, of which three thousand were Hochland long rifles. There was a strong artillery contingent, including great cannons and mortars.

The lack of cavalry was troubling. Every army needs cavalry; it's swift moving, can react quickly to danger and shock any enemy with a well-timed charge. Valkin had hoped to secure the services of the Knights of Sigmar's Blood, but they refused to join the expedition due to bad omens (as it turned out, the omens proved correct). The only cavalry Valkin had were one thousand pistoliers – led



The many forms of the greenskin: orc warlord, shaman, warrior and goblin.

by a grizzled officer called Karl Benz, and a small contingent of Knights of the Blazing Sun.

Pistoliers can be a useful addition to any army, if used correctly. Their ranks are wholly comprised of the younger sons of Empire nobles, all eager to prove themselves in battle and gain acceptance into a knightly order. Pistoliers need a firm hand to lead them, and ensure their hot-headedness does not get them into trouble.

They are best employed in a harassment role, peppering the enemy flanks and more unwieldy formations with pistol shot. Once battle is joined, they are excellent as support troops – a charge by pistol-armed cavalry can be devastating. In modern Imperial warfare pistolier captains have been known to carry powerful repeater pistols, multi-barrelled versions of their charges' counterparts, which are capable of delivering such a fusillade of fire it can punish any foe.

Early in my career, only my second campaign in fact, I led a force in defence of the town of Bögenhafen. A Chaos warband, led by a formidable champion of the dark gods, advanced upon the town, bent on violence and destruction. Among the foul cohorts, gathered doubtless from the lawless wilderness, lingering remnants from the Great War Against Chaos many years prior, were a large regiment of Chaos warriors.

Bereft of knights with which to crush the marching horde, I employed pistoliers to harass the Chaos fiends. Their constant raids infuriated the slow-moving Chaos warriors and took a tremendous toll on them, despite their heavy armour, pistol shot making a mockery of it. The horde reached my lines bloodied and nigh-on broken. It was then a small matter to send the foe to flight with halberd and spear.

The lesson here is simple: play to the strengths of your regiments, resist the urge to attack prematurely, harass, disrupt and meet a weakened foe with decisive action.

Missile Troops

Bows

It is a foolish general who ignores the value of missile troops. Being able to attack the enemy at a distance without loss to one's own side is a vital aspect of modern warfare, and the effective utilisation of this tactic should be top of a general's list.

Archers have been used in battle since time immemorial. The bow has many strengths: long range, high impact and a speedy rate of fire. With the invention of the bodkin arrowhead, a well-aimed missile can pierce plate armour. Arrows can be accurately aimed at individual targets, or fired in devastating volleys onto massed enemy heads. If facing charging cavalry, it is recommended to form archers up into wedge formations protected by infantry blocks, as this allows them to blanket fire onto the enemy efficiently and safely.

Archers can be placed in protection behind infantry lines, preferably on elevated ground, where they can fire over friendly ranks. They can be stretched out in skirmish lines in front of the main infantry lines to harass an enemy, falling back as they approach.

The bow's disadvantage is that it can only be wielded effectively by a highly trained individual. Archery is an art and it takes time and resources to produce such exceptional soldiers.

Crossbows

The use of the crossbow has grown in popularity, despite some reactionaries thinking they are not honourable weapons. Personally, I will use any weapon that gives me an advantage, and crossbows do have useful attributes.

They were first used with distinction by the mercenary bands that inhabit Tilea and the Border Princes. As these men offered their

services to an ever-widening circle of clients, others began to recognise the strength of their trademark weapon.

A crossbow is more powerful than a bow and has great stopping power, but it has a considerably shorter range. Another significant disadvantage is the comparable firing rate. Where a trained archer can fire up to six arrows per minute, a crossbowman will manage only one. Also, a crossbowman needs clear line of sight to a target, so protecting them behind infantry is problematic.

However, a crossbow can be fired by practically anybody. There is little art or technique involved; load, point, shoot. A contingent of men can be armed and trained in the effective use of a crossbow in days, rather than years in the case of a bow.

Handguns

Finally we come to a relatively new addition to a general's arsenal: the handgun. The earliest example is on display in the museum of Nuln, where it was invented. It consists of a metal tube with a fuse hole at the rear and a wooden stock. Black powder is poured into the muzzle, then a round stone rammed home after it, then wadding to keep the shot in place. More powder is poured into the fuse hole and a slow-match applied. Barring accidents, the stone is hurled at extreme speed and power. It is noisy, dangerous for the wielder, inaccurate and short-ranged, but it represents the first step on the road to the development of the gunpowder weapon, a weapon which today underpins the might of the Imperial war machine. Few generals now would contemplate going to war without support from gunpowder weapons of one type or another.



Artillery

THE MARCH INTO THE MOUNTAINS. The Middle Mountains are perilous and difficult. Valkin was marching eighteen thousand men, with all the necessary accoutrements of war, into terrain consisting of rocky paths, dense pine forests, narrow ravines and boulder-strewn alpine slopes where the weather threatens to close in at any time. And it's all uphill.

It must have been hard for those soldiers. They had been idle for many months and were unprepared for such exertion. They were used to warm fires in the barrack rooms, some weapons drill and three square meals a day. Now they toiled up the slopes, far from home, carrying their arms and equipment on their backs, stumbling and tripping on the treacherous ground and expecting to be attacked at any moment.

The nature of the terrain and the size of the army caused the regiments to become stretched out. The column was several miles long and the gaps between the infantry blocks widened as each day wore on. It is difficult for a general to keep his men together on the march, particularly in rough terrain, but it is imperative that he does so. I remember at the Siege of Grundburg, my relief column was cut to pieces by Norsemen marauders as they cut through the Teutoburg forest to save time; we all regretted that decision.

It was especially difficult for the baggage and artillery train to keep up with the infantry but Valkin was keen to reach Brass Keep, a disused fort high in the mountains, where he intended to set up a base and destroy the orcs. Valkin's chief scouts warned him that his army was vulnerable, but Valkin refused to slow the pace.

At the army passed deeper into the mountains, the weather took a turn for the worse. Heavy rain turned the pass into rapids and the ground turned to mud which slid down the mountains. In this awful environment the men had to bridge crevices, dig wagons and cannons out of quagmires and avoid the frequent rock falls that rumbled down from the

mountains. It was then, with the army strung out and at its most vulnerable, that the orcs attacked.

The orcs used the terrain to their advantage very cleverly. Using terrain and the lie of the land is an important consideration for a general. For example, I remember luring a host of orcs into the marshes of south Ostermark with skirmishing huntsmen. As I watched the foul creatures wallow and bellow and drown I partook of a particularly fine Estalian red which, in my opinion, was the finest wine I ever tasted. Of course, that may be because of the fond memories I associate it with.

The orcs needled Valkin's line with missile fire and swift attacks, killing and wounding as many as they could before disappearing into the rocks before relief could be sent from other elements of the column. Casualties were not high, but the effect on the men's morale was damaging. They lived in constant fear of predation, knowing that the enemy could hit them hard, only to vanish like smoke. Valkin ordered his knights to defend the rearmost echelons of the column, although this precluded him from using them as an attacking force at the front.

Facing an unfamiliar enemy on unfamiliar ground is difficult and fraught with danger. I remember the first time as a young man I formed up against a beastmen horde in a shield wall. I had never seen such creatures before, and the sight of them was hard to describe, and the smell even harder. I will always remember the man to my left soiling his britches, but the shame he felt at this humiliation made him fight with all the more ferocity; he saved my life three times on that dreadful morning, but he died with a spear through his belly.

Frustration rose in Valkin's rank-and-file and the commanding officers were frustrated not to be able to get to grips with the enemy. But the orcs refused to be baited and Valkin was constantly denied a chance to hit back, until they reached the entrance to Blood Hollow.



Huntsmen make their way through the dense pine forests of the Middle Mountains.

BATTLE OF BLOOD HOLLOW

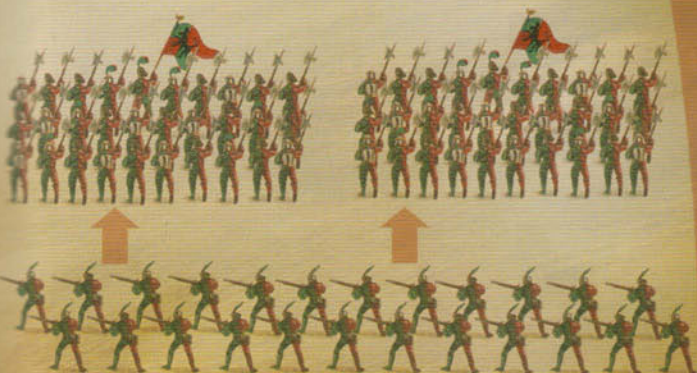
*Orcs move in from their hiding
places in the mountains.*



Pistoliers, having over-reached the Empire lines are ambushed in a narrow defile and slaughtered.



Pistoliers move in to finish the orcs off but continue chase into valley through over-zealousness.



Artillery is used to flush out the ambushing orcs.



LEGEND



	Halberdiers
	Swordsmen
	Handgunners
	Knights of the Blazing Sun
	Pistoliers
	Mortars
	Great Cannons

Artillery

FROM THE MOUTHS OF NULN-FORGED DRAGONS. As spring warmed the air and the snows on the lower peaks began to melt, the vanguard of the army passed through a narrow gulley which opened up into a spacious valley, cradle shaped, a mile long and half a mile across at its widest point. It sloped down from their vantage point, affording a fine view of the steep walls which were covered in dense pine woods. At the far end, the valley narrowed and disappeared round a bend.

In the middle of the valley was an orc encampment, little more than a collection of crude huts surrounded by gibbets, in which corpses drew flies in buzzing swarms. There were a few orcs in the camp who appeared not to have noticed the arrival of the column. Valkin suspected that this seemingly easy target was bait to lure his army into the valley. His advisors concurred. 'An ambush discovered can be made to pay a high price for their ruse,' Valkin said.

Valkin's military expertise was limited but solid. He suggested sending in a small force of skirmishers to entice the enemy out from hiding. This would have been a reasonable policy to adopt, however Valkin's master engineer and artillery commander, Hermann Fulke, had a better idea.

Fulke is something of a folk hero in Hochland. He is regarded as one of the best artillery commanders to have ever lived and had an instinctive knowledge of how to use his weapons to their best advantage. His hero status was helped by his reputation as a hard drinker who disliked authority. He was often to be found drinking with Karl Benz, who shared his temperament and appetites, if not his intelligence.

Fulke suggested setting his artillery batteries up on the high slope and blasting the Orcs out of their hiding places. This was an attractive idea as it meant that no soldiers needed to be put in immediate danger, and the Orcs would get a taste of Valkin's revenge.

Orders were passed down the column and all efforts were made to get the artillery train to Blood Hollow. By mid-afternoon, Fulke was positioning his guns and mortars. Scouts had advanced into the trees and reported the orcs' whereabouts as best they could. Fulke noted down the information and made his final adjustments.

To the rear, on the highest point of the slope, he placed his mortars. These war machines fire their missiles on a high trajectory, over the heads of the men in front and down onto the enemy. In front of them, halfway down the slope, he placed his formidable great cannons. From their position, they could fire directly at where the orcs were reported to be. At the bottom of the slope and hidden behind a protective screen of infantry, he placed his hand-guns. These are devastating weapons at short range, and perfectly placed to fire on any orc that tried to attack them head-on. Satisfied, Fulke primed his weapons and his men prepared for the rigours of combat.

The effectiveness of artillery is dependant on the crews that man the guns. Artillery is slow, inaccurate, dangerous, noisy and uncouth; and such it can be if it is used incompetently. However, with well-drilled crews who are certain of their tasks and the guns they tend, artillery batteries are unmatched in the potential damage they can inflict.

Fulke's guns, with a mixture of solid shot to blast holes in solid ranks and grape shot to scatter flesh-shredding debris, could take an army apart before the enemy got within bow range. However, his enemy was hidden in trees, and he needed pinpoint accuracy and placement of shot to 'coax' them out into the open.

Nuln gun crewman in traditional black garb.



The war machines in Valkin's army were well-protected by wooden stakes.



Helmets of the Empire



The artisans and armourers of the Empire are constantly forging new suits of platemail, shields and helmets with which to protect the land's brave fighting men. Every state has its own designs and artistic and functional subtleties, though each is ready protection against the enemies of the Empire.

The cannons spoke first. As the loaders crouched with their fingers in their ears, gunners touched their slow matches to the fuses. Smoke and flame spewed from the muzzles and the guns rocked back on their carriages; my memories of unleashed artillery in full and violent cry are still strong in my mind. As the echoes of their report bounced down the valley, the gun crews were already swabbing out the barrels ready for another shot. The cannon balls ripped into the trees, splintering trunks and boughs and ploughing into the earth, sending clods of mud and shards of wood flying through the air. The noise was incredible. Then the mortars opened fire, lobbing their shells into the trees.

The bombardment was relentless. Fulke had drilled his men well and the cannons and mortars roared, firing a constant stream of shot at the enemy. Fulke was a marvel. He strode among his beloved weapons and their sweating crews, in turn cajoling and bullying his men to work faster. Working without the aid of range finders, he minutely adjusted the angle and facing of individual weapons, ensuring they caused maximum damage.

Working with black powder weapons is dangerous and backbreaking work. The different elements of black powder tend to separate in the barrels during transit. Before being used, it has to be properly mixed. The cannon barrels have to be clean and dry before shot and powder is loaded. Charge and ball are then rammed down the barrel, followed by a wad to keep them in place in readiness for the powder fuse to be applied and lit.

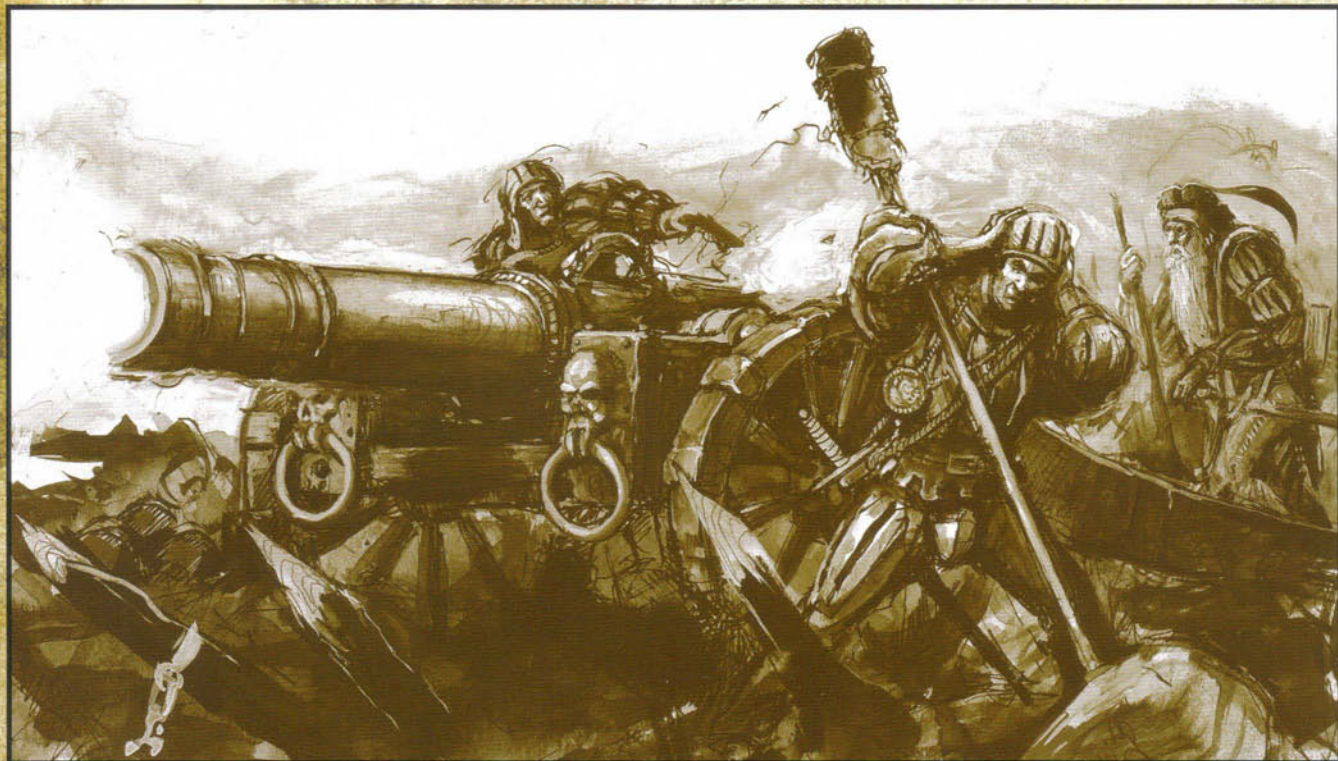
If the crews have done their jobs properly, the fuse ignites the charge and the resulting explosion blasts the ball

out of the barrel. If the charge is too weak, the powder not mixed correctly, or an obstruction met in the barrel, the results can be catastrophic. It is certainly the case that a gunner is more likely to be killed by his own weapon than by meeting the enemy face to face. Fulke was no fool, and respected the tempestuous nature of his guns. He ensured his men knew exactly what they were doing, and that they never took any chances.

The bombardment continued and the forests on both sides of the valleys were turned into death traps; cannon balls careened in at a straight angle as mortars rained down from above. The bombardment was so intense that within a few minutes the first orcs were spotted emerging from the tree line. They staggered into the open through the swirling clouds of smoke and hungry flames. Many were horribly wounded, but a wounded orc is dangerous and some charged the infantry lines, howling their pain and anger, eager to exact revenge. As they approached, the infantry lines parted, revealing the handgunners.

The first volley tore the orcs to shreds, blasting them into mulch. Into the roar of the deadly fusillade of the handguns they charged, only to be cut down. The carnage caused the Empire soldiers to cheer lustily, and these cheers rose in pitch when Valkin ordered the pistoliers to finish the reeling orcs off. The artillery had broken the main orc ambushing party, without any Empire soldier meeting danger. After days of frustration, the day had gone the Empire's way. But that was about to change.

The Guns of the Empire



Since the founding of the Imperial Gunnery School in Nuln, artillery has become an important part of the Empire's method of war. Most state armies have a battery of cannons of some description or other, and the prejudices harboured by the more old-school generals and warmongers have largely died away, to be replaced – as with me, hoary old warhorse that I am – by a grudging respect tempered by distrust of such war machines.

The use of black powder weapons by men is relatively new compared to the dwarfs, who are old masters of the craft. Men initially learned the art of forging and using guns from our staunchest allies, but have since taken the art and, with the energy and ingenuity that has seen our race rise to prominence, developed it to new heights of destructive capability.

However, that destructive capability is not always reserved for the enemy. Black powder weapons are notoriously unstable. It is for this reason that most of the men who work with such devices match them in their own mental instability. The rest are either too stupid or suicidal to care. It takes a certain type of person to dedicate his life to

these weapons. It takes years of concerted study and practical experience to learn to use them effectively. Black powder weapons have the potential to ruin an army; whether it is the enemy's or their own is up to the master gunner and his crews.

A treaty by Hallar Hansleben, Master Engineer of Wissenland, reveals the dangers of black powder in more precise detail than I, as a humble general and soldier, could hope to convey:

'In the use of black powder and the machineries of war, care must be taken. Disaster can strike for manifold reasons. If the powder mixture is wrong it can fail to ignite, or detonate prematurely with devastating results for anyone in the vicinity. If the barrel has been incorrectly cast or weaknesses or cracks develop due to poor maintenance, it can explode. In the light of such eminently common pitfalls always deploy artillery far enough away from the rest of the army to minimise the risk to them.'

That said, black powder weapons are a vital part of the armies of men. They are powerful enough to destroy even the toughest of foes, and do a marvellous job of softening an enemy up before they get to grips with the infantry.

I remember fighting the Chaos horde of Khalak the Bloodied on Bloodmoss Plain. I set my army up on the edge of the plain, forcing the enemy to cross bare terrain, straight down the barrels of my great cannons. The Chaos troops were so packed together that there was little need to aim and grape shot tore through the heavily armoured ranks with impunity, ripping flesh and pulping bone. By the time they reached the front lines, Khalak and his depraved army they were a ragged sight, and no mistake! My guns tore the heart out of the attack, even beheading the Chaos general when he failed to avoid a cannon ball, and victory was assured.

Hallar goes on to describe the varying machineries commonly employed by the Empire. This extract, an abridged version, taken from his writings, entitled *Machineries of Destruction – The Manifold Methods of Maiming the Mass and the Mob on the Field of Battle*, provides a commentary on their principle uses.





Great Cannons

These immense guns form the backbone of an artillery battery, hurling solid balls of iron into the enemy, ripping through ranks and devastating formations. Armour is no protection against a cannon ball and the effect a well-aimed salvo can have on tightly packed regiments cannot be underestimated.

Great cannons vary in length and bore size, but they have to be small enough to be drawn on their carriages to and from battlefields. Once deployed for battle, they are rarely moved as that would involve hitching up the draught ponies. It is vital that they are put in the right position to cause maximum damage to the enemy well before the battle begins. It is recommended to deploy great cannons on high ground, the angle of elevation makes for a better field of vision, improves range and allows for greater force upon impact, due to the inevitable effects of gravity.

Solid shot can be replaced with grape shot. This is used at a closer range than solid shot, often when the cannon itself is being rushed by the enemy. Grape shot is made up of a canvas bag filled with solid, round, iron projectiles about the size of musket balls. When they hit a solid object, the bag splits, scattering the projectiles over a wide area and at great velocity. The damage this does to a human body is indescribable, and even the bone that shatters in the impact can fly through the air, causing even more injuries.



Mortars

Mortars are designed to lob a hollow, explosive projectile high into the air to fall onto enemy heads. They are shorter and heavier than cannons and far harder to move once positioned. Because of the powerful downward force of the blast, they are removed from their wheel carriages before use, otherwise the wooden frame would be shattered and the weapon made useless.

Mortars are often used in sieges, where armies are more static, and their high trajectory is perfect for firing projectiles over walls to damage buildings and densely packed infantry.

Unlike cannon missiles, mortar bombs are hollow iron spheres, filled with black powder. The fuse is lit and the bomb placed in the stubby barrel – a task, not without risk. The mortar bomb is fired and if the fuse is the right length and does not go out, it explodes among the enemy ranks, filling a large area with shreds of lacerating metal.

In capable hands, mortars are very effective at blasting great holes open in enemy formations. The effect a successful strike can have on an enemy is marked; there is nothing like having to march over the bloody, twisted remains of former comrades to put the wind up a foe!

The Helblaster Volley Gun

Or Von Meinkopf's macro-mainspring of multitudinous precipitation of pernicious lead, to give it the proper title. This device is a terribly effective weapon at cutting down enemy ranks – the sheer velocity of its shot capable of penetrating even thick armour.

On a sturdy frame are nine small-bore cannon barrels, lined up in three rows of three. When the first set of three is fired in a devastating blast of fire and shrapnel, the crew rotate the frame to move the next row of cannons into position. They can fire these barrels, rotate and fire the third set and finally reload all nine barrels, or they can rotate, reload, fire, rotate, reload, fire and so on for a more sustained firing rate.

The destructive capability of the volley gun is enormous. The advantage of being able to fire several shots at once, then follow it up with another salvo is obvious and any enemy would think twice before getting in the way of such a machine.

Keep this in mind when deploying the weapon. Clever placement can severely limit the movement of an enemy who recognises the great threat the volley gun holds; and if he does not recognise the threat? So much the better, he will pay a high price for his stupidity.

Of course, the complexity of the device and the unpredictable nature of black powder ensures that the volley gun is prone to accident and malfunction. Maintain distance when supervising gunnery crew to ensure safe observation.

The Steam Tank

The steam tank was designed by the genius Leonardo de Miragliano, who wanted to create a self-propelling device which could crush the enemy and pour shot at the same time. After years of research and painful experimentation, he perfected the design for the first steam tank, and the ways of war in the Empire were changed forever.

Sadly, of the twelve he built, only eight now remain. These are looked after with meticulous care by the Imperial School of Engineers who constantly strive to improve on the design and make plans to build new machines. However, the original plans have been lost and, no disrespect intended, but none of our fine engineers match Miragliano's fervid genius.



Herr Hansleben goes on to mention numerous other devices in such exacting and pedantic detail as only men of his ilk can. I confess, the finer details of how the steam tanks work, for example, are well beyond me, but I know what they can do on the battlefield. I fielded the *Deliverance* in a battle against a goblin horde. I do not say I commanded it, because the captain of the steam tank did as he pleased, and I was happy for him to do so.

As my cannons opened fire on the gibbering horde, the *Deliverance* advanced towards them, smoke belching from its chimney stack. It clanked and chugged and rocked back as the steam-powered cannon on its prow blasted shot into the goblins. Its armoured bulk was impervious to arrows, and as it ploughed into the goblins ranks they crawled over it, desperately trying to get inside. But the hatches were battened down, and the steam tank



cut a green swathe through the terrified goblins who were crushed under its relentless advance.

Steam tanks are rare, and the School of Engineers is wary of letting them loose in battle, such is their value. But should you be fortunate to command one, just set it loose and watch it shoot, crush and kill.

A final piece of advice to impart on the use of artillery is as follows: always position them behind your front-line infantry. Cannon crews are not combat soldiers, and are vulnerable if left exposed to fast-moving enemy formations or light cavalry. Ensure they are well protected so they are safe to work their destructive magic on the enemy. With the high ground, they can fire their missiles over the heads of your troops and into the enemy. Watch the morale of your men rise as they witness shot punch into enemy formations, creating bloody swathes through their ranks.

Artillery

CHARGE OF THE PISTOLIERS. Benz led the pistoliers, bent on spilling orc blood. Seeing the enemy in such a state of disarray, they whooped and yelled as they crested the brow of the slope and charged. The foremost orcs were cut down, too dazed and bloodied to resist. Pistol reports cracked and sabres sliced as the pistoliers set about their duty with relish. More orcs were pouring out of the woods and as Fulke kept up his bombardment they discarded any thought of a counterattack and fled with the frenzied pistoliers in hot pursuit.

It is at moments like this, when a warrior's blood is up and he feels invincible, that he needs a steady leader to rein him in and remind him of his vulnerability. The pistoliers were advancing pell-mell into territory known to be held by orcs, and they had no idea how many more of them were hidden. If Benz had his wits about him, he would have called a halt to the charge and returned to the safety of his lines, confident that a victory had been won. Instead, he led his men on, far away from the support of the rest of the army.

Benz and his men were doomed. They followed the orcs recklessly to the far end of the valley, hoping to finish the massacre as the enemy got caught in the bottleneck where the cliffs narrowed. As they closed in for the final kill, intent on their quarry, the tree line was suddenly filed with hundreds of furious orcs. They sped out from their hiding places, some riding snorting boars, and set upon the panicking cavalry. By then the horses were tired and the orcs were attacking from the side, hacking at the horses' legs with cleavers and thrusting at the men with spears. Orcs positioned on the slopes hurled rocks down on the hapless men's heads, adding to the death toll.

The orcs that had fled now turned on their pursuers, and soon the pistoliers were surrounded on three sides. Valkin

looked on, aghast as his cavalry was cut to pieces. Only Benz and a few of his men managed to return to the Empire position, with the whoops and jeers of the orcs ringing in their ears. There is little worse for a general who has victory in his sights than to witness such useless slaughter; there was nothing Valkin could do for his men, and for a leader that feeling of impotence is almost beyond endurance.

CONCLUSION AND LEGACY. There is little legacy of this occurrence as far as the wider Empire is concerned, but for Valkin's battle group that headed further into the inhospitable mountains, the loss of the cavalry was a death sentence. After the humbling of the pistoliers, the orcs grew bolder. They attacked the baggage train, which was virtually undefended, and continued to harass the column as it struggled to advance. The orcs attacked and destroyed column elements, one after the other.

What the battle shows is the enormous effect artillery can have if well deployed and commanded. Artillery can not only be used on the open flats of a pitched battle, but it can be adapted for more specialised use. The hidden orcs, even after they were discovered, would still have been a difficult enemy to overcome in their prepared positions in the trees, and an infantry assault would doubtless have cost many lives. The artillery solved this problem.

The lesson of the Battle of Blood Hollow is simple: choose leaders carefully, because it can make all the difference. Where Fulke's actions and those of his men turned the tide of the battle to Valkin's favour, the zeal of Benz turned it again, to the eventual defeat of the whole battle force.



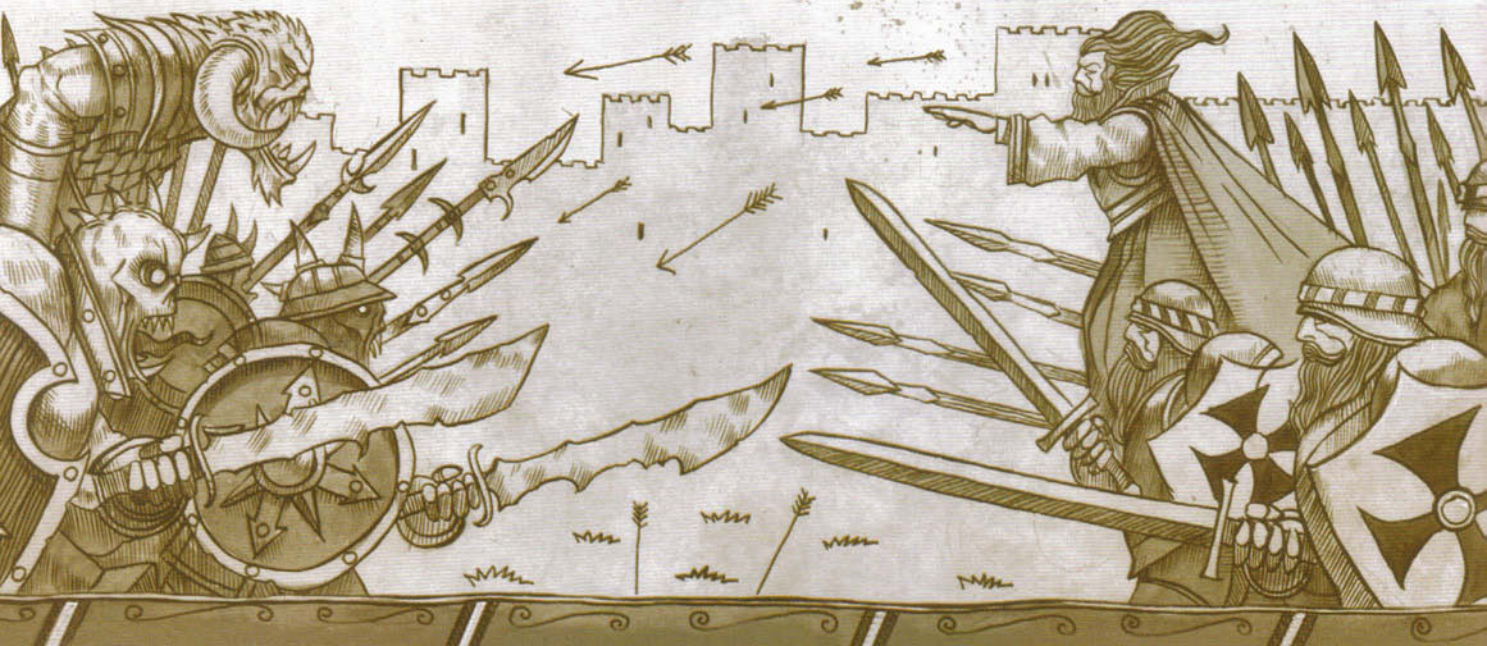
Though useful as a harassing, fast-moving force, on this occasion the zeal of the pistoliers would prove to be their undoing.

Courage and Faith

The Battle for Kislen's Gate

'The city was surrounded, like an island in a storm-wracked sea. The ground was swallowed by the rampant Chaos host and their furious howls and the tramp of their feet battered our ears and ate away our courage. But Magnus was unperturbed; it is the general's duty to show nothing but confidence and we drew strength from that. Without him, we would surely have failed.'

— Captain Steergart of the
Altdorf Halberdiers



Courage and Faith



The hordes of Asavar Kul gather in their thousands.

THE CRADLE OF DISASTER. In the year 2302, a vast horde of Chaos marauders and daemons invaded the southern lands with the aim of laying our people to waste. It was a time of deeds great and terrible, and they must be remembered so we can learn the lessons they hold. Even now rumours reach me in my mansion that the stormclouds of war gather far to the north. I wonder if my retirement will be curtailed for one final foray into the mouth of death?

We live in an age when invasion and destruction can strike from any and all sides. We will never be safe from the scourge of the north. We need to gather an army strong enough to attack the northern barbarians and their daemonic overlords in their own lands. We need to strike at their heart in order to cut it out, but they march in numbers uncountable, and as we halt each of their increasingly frequent attacks, we suffer grievously. In the painful aftermath, we have to take time to train more soldiers, make more equipment and rekindle our courage. And when we regain our strength, the enemy is already attacking our borders again. I confess, that on some nights when the remembered sounds of battle ring loudly in my ears, I wonder if we can survive against such odds.

Men, dwarfs and elves have been battling the forces of Chaos before they even began recording their history on stone and parchment. Ever have the hordes of darkness swept from their desolate strongholds in the blasted plains beyond the mountains on the northern borders of Kislev, and ever have they been thrown back.

Chaos is the insidious enemy, attacking from without and within. Its foul-spawned Beastmen lurk in our forests and mountains, murdering the unwary and laying waste to towns. Cults and sacrificial sects fester in our cities, undermining our centres of power, and weakening us from the inside. And periodically, when their fickle gods decide, Chaos invades our lands in vast numbers, exploiting us in our weakened state with a mind to sweep us all from existence.

I believe this state of affairs will never stop, and history is teaching those who are brave enough to look that as we get weaker, the enemy gets stronger. Their attacks become more frequent and I sense our willingness to fight is being eroded as a feeling of hopelessness steals over our people's hearts. The only weapon of use against the enemy that we stand against is courage and faith, and this was demonstrated by Magnus the Pious, and all those who fought with him against Asavar Kul, daemon warlord of Chaos, and the scourge of Kislev.

Courage and Faith

Warlord Asavar Kul, leader of the Chaos forces.

AN ENEMY RAMPANT. A clever enemy will take full advantage of a weakened foe, and an enemy who has time on his side is more able to follow such a policy. The forces of Chaos, safe in their northern lands, can choose when to attack. This fact makes the task of keeping our lands safe a difficult one and it falls mostly on the shoulders of the Kislevites.

My many campaigns never led me to Kislev, but some of my comrades did have cause to travel there. By all accounts it is a place of extremes, where the culture and civilisation of the cities is offset by the hardness and simple lifestyle of the people who inhabit the endless steppe. It is a place of awesome beauty, which I would dearly like to see, although my ailing limbs and more sensible wife have put paid to any ambitions I had of actually going there. Besides, there is nothing more beautiful than the green forests and meadows of the Empire, which I have dedicated my life to defend. I am happy to live out the rest of my days in my simple walled mansion and gardens, reflecting on a life well spent.

However, I have led armies which included Kislevite warriors. Although they were often difficult to control and harder to impress (I earned their respect long after they earned mine), they were formidable fighters, and I owe my life to a winged lancer called Ivan Porcheski. I fancy that marauder would have skewered me like a young deer had not Ivan put an arrow through his neck in the very nick of time. Ivan, I raise my goblet to you and your enormous family.

It is these hardy people who have to endure the attacks of Chaos. They have been a sterling guard against the depravations of the dark for many centuries, and we have much to thank them for. The blood of their people has stained the frozen tundra many times in their efforts to keep the invader out. But sometimes the enemy gathers in such extraordinary numbers, that even the battle-hardened Kislevites cannot stand before them.

In 2301, the first signs that an invasion force was gathering were seen. In the Translynsk region, in the north of

The Chaos hordes were unstoppable as they rampaged through northern Kislev.



Kislev, portents of death were everywhere. People dreamed of rivers of blood, and animals and humans were born with hideous deformities. Then the raids began, in strength and numbers unheard of for many decades. Bands of fierce barbarians rampaged from the mountain passes and laid waste to villages and farms. Kislev patrols reported sightings of the enemy flooding onto the steppe, setting up camps that stretched for miles and sacrificing their prisoners in grisly rituals. Some said it was the largest army ever assembled and a pall of fear settled over the land.

More warriors poured into Kislev, and word began to spread that a vicious war master – part man, part daemon – who ate human flesh and had the blessing of the Chaos gods, led them. His name besmirches our history in bloody letters: Asavar Kul.

As winter spread its chill into 2302, it became apparent that a war of disastrous proportions was to befall Kislev. Armies were mustered to see off the foe, but their best efforts could not stop large portions of the north from falling into enemy hands. The sheer size of Kislev and the harshness of the terrain make it difficult for any army to move swiftly, but slowly the dark armies advanced, sweeping away all resistance.

By the end of a year of hard and fruitless campaigning, the roads were choked with refugees heading south to the cities. The land north of the river Lynsk was now the domain of Chaos. Praag and the capital city, Kislev, were overrun with the fearful homeless. Not much is written about the other victims of war and their plight is often forgotten: the farmers turfed from their homes, whole villages fleeing from the enemy, the pain of the orphans and widows that war creates.

Those who made it to Praag would rue the day, for they had merely postponed their doom. In the winter of 2302, Praag and everyone inside was put to the sword. It was this terrible disaster that spurred the many leaders of men to unite in their efforts to destroy the foe.

Kislev, Our Allies

The people of the windswept land of Kislev to the northeast of the Empire have been our staunch allies for many centuries. Kislev is the bastion upon which the hordes of Chaos from the infested lands to the far north throw themselves time and time again, only to be hurled back to their dark world.

Since the Battle for Kislev's Gate, the ties between Kislev and the Empire have strengthened all the more and there is increased recognition among our people that Kislev provides the world with a great service in holding back the ravaging hordes of Chaos.

Kislev is a country of staggering scale, stretching from the borders of the Empire to the south and west, the Sea of Claws to the west and the Worlds Edge Mountains to the north east. The more fertile plains of the south gradually shift to the vast tundra which stretches for hundreds of miles to the north. The great size of Kislev causes invading Chaos armies great problems, as supplies are short and they have to travel great distances between settlements.

Kislevites are shaped by the harsh terrain and environment in which they live. They are a hardy race, tough and resolute (there is mutual respect between them and the dwarfs) and possessed of a grim and rather fatalistic sense of humour. The less civilised north is inhabited by tribes of nomadic horsemen. They travel the tundra, seeking good grazing ground for their sturdy horses. They are justly famous for their horse archers; superlative horsemen and marksmen who loose arrows with unerring accuracy, forever staying out of reach of their harassed enemies.

The south is less wild, the ground more fertile, and where Kislev's cities can be found. The grandest of the trio – the others being Praag and Erengard – is the capital, Kislev. From inside the famous onion-domed Bokha Palace rules the bewitching Ice Queen, Tzarina Katarin. An aloof and cold woman, yet commanding fanatical devotion from her subjects, this powerful mage keeps an iron grip over her land and demands respect from her allies.

As Chaos incursions into her lands increase, more help is sent from the Empire. Kislev's armies of fierce kossars and winged lancers march side by side with Empire regiments and knights, all bonded with the noble task of keeping the lands of mortal men safe from harm.

Those who regard the Kislevites as being a touch savage and uncivilised would do well to remember that it is the shedding of their young men's blood on the frozen borders to the north that keeps us safe in our beds. They deserve nothing less than our utmost respect.



Courage and Faith

A DIVIDED EMPIRE. At this time, the Empire was split into warring factions. It was a period in which there was not one true Emperor to unite the land and this very fact placed it in utter peril. The Empire was disunited, little more than a collection of fiefs and kingdoms, seeking to undermine each other for their own gain. This state of civil unrest had waged for centuries, and it seemed unlikely that the problem would be resolved.

It was to this divided land that Tzar Alexis Romanoff appealed for aid. Praag was razed to the ground and the Kislevite army there all but destroyed. The remnants of the decimated force fled south, warning of the fall of the great city and the encroaching legions of Chaos. The Tzar was well aware of the internal strife that afflicted the Empire, and this could only be a hindrance to him. Even if he managed to secure help, would the men of the Empire march together after years of indentured in-fighting? The Tzar was a shrewd cove, and he directed his appeal to one who had been trying to repair the rifts in the Empire's fabric: Magnus the Pious.

It is said that Magnus the Pious was a direct descendant of Sigmar himself, and he possessed bravery, strength of will and leadership. Magnus was also a deeply religious man and a scholar. Magnus tirelessly debated, provoked and cajoled with the elector counts to seek alliances with one another and end the tortuous bloodshed. He gained a great reputation and the ordinary folk of the Empire grew to love him, but the counts kept their own council. Until, that is, news of the Chaos invasion of Kislev reached their ears.

As with all things of magnitude, the rumours were accompanied by ill omens, just as they had been in Kislev over the previous winters. In the Reikland, a plague of boils left thousands dead and many more horribly scarred. Blood dripped from statues of Sigmar, and in Gloenuck a pig with eight legs and a crown on its head was born. Fear pervaded the land, and the counts began to look beyond their own petty concerns and saw on the horizon a greater threat.

Magnus arrived in Nuln to entreat to the council that the Empire should come together to fight the growing evil. After a rousing speech condemning the Chaos invaders and extolling the virtues of mankind and the strength of a united Empire, the council members leapt to their feet and cheered. It was agreed: the states of the Empire would unite to defeat the foe, and Magnus would lead them.

A few days later, as news spread through the streets of Nuln and out into the country that the armies of the Empire were going to march on the great enemy, the Tzar's envoy asked for an audience with Magnus. He had expected to see a council split by the usual interminable squabbles. Instead, his heart was glad to see them united in a common cause.

'The streets were alive with the news that the civil war was over. Instead of looking to each other and seeing enemies, they looked at the darkness that spread their way. Thank the gods that Magnus the Pious made them see the wisdom of unity. After I appealed to him, Magnus agreed that it would be best to meet the enemy on Kislev's soil, and put a halt to his depravations as soon as possible,' wrote Ambassador Topol.

Magnus the Pious, inspired orator, uniter of the Empire and its eventual Emperor.



Courage and Faith

MAGNUS'S ARMY MARCHES NORTH. The army Magnus forged was unique. His allied force consisted of two armies and the first of which, mainly comprised of fast-moving Kislevites, rode ahead of the first army in the hope of rescuing what was left of Praag. Alas, they arrived too late and though succeeded in destroying rearguard elements of the Chaos army, they were forced to turn back in pursuit of the main Chaos forces.

With Magnus's main, more slow-moving, army it was the first time in history every state of the Empire donated troops to a single force. It took many months, and the men from the most outlying regions had to march all winter to reach the muster in the spring of 2303.

There were serious concerns about how they would be able to feed such a multitude, but the feeling of goodwill towards the troops was so strong, that city folk, villagers and farmers donated food and supplies in gestures of thanks to those who were going to fight for them. This phenomenon happened to me several times on campaign, and it warmed my heart to see the common folk show their gratitude by giving to us when they often had little for themselves.

Although events within the Empire were encouraging, the news from the north was not. After the fall of Praag, the Chaos host was wending its way south to the city of Kislev. It was evident that they were not content with what they had already achieved. If they reached Kislev before the allies, it would fall as Praag had done, and the passage to the Empire would be open.

At the death of winter, Magnus led his army into Kislev. No records exist as to the exact composition of his host, but contemporary writing tells of an army of many thousands, churning up the ground with boot and hoof. Men from all over the Empire, proudly wearing their bright state



Warrior priests of Sigmar joined the banner of Magnus to repel the hordes of Chaos from the land.

colours and led by their counts and generals, marched with pride. And at the front rode Magnus, resplendent on his warhorse, leading the mightiest host ever gathered by his people.

They picked up more troops as they journeyed northeast and people marvelled at the magnificence of the army and wondered how anyone could stand against them. Their forces were bolstered further when a large army of dwarfs joined them, following in the wake of the dwarfs who had already marched out from Karaz a Karak and were thought to be joining the muster at Kislev.

Dwarfs and the Kislevites have long been allies. They respect each others' courage and stoicism, and have come to each others' aid on many occasions. The dwarfs had answered the Tzar's call in impressive fashion and Magnus was glad to welcome them.

The Birth of the Battle Wizards

During the Great War Against Chaos, when all the mortal lands were threatened by a tide of Chaos coming from the north, Magnus the Pious, in his esteemed wisdom, requested the presence of the great elf mage, Teclis, High Loremaster of the White Tower. Teclis, recognising the threat and also that the hope of saving the world from it rested mainly on the shoulders of mankind, travelled to the Empire to grant Magnus an audience.



Together they decided that men should be taught the ways of magic, to be used for the good of the mortal races. Teclis gathered together many hedge wizards and taught them how to properly control the winds of magic and create fire balls, lightning bolts and other spells which could be used in battle.

For many years, the priests of Sigmar had preached that magic was evil, born from Chaos, and that anyone who wielded it was evil. Teclis, with the approval of Magnus, changed this policy. Instead, people with a touch of magic about them were to be taught how to use it properly and for the good of the Empire, under the eyes of the law.

Teclis himself was present at the Battle for Kislev's Gate, and his skills contributed to the Empire victory. We remain eternally grateful to our allies who played a small but important role in saving the world from the deadly hordes for the north and ending the Great War Against Chaos.

When Magnus became Emperor, he used his power to implement a plan which if proposed a few years earlier would probably have seen the instigator at best turned out of office, at worst executed: he proposed to build colleges of magic in Altdorf. As it was, and rightly so, the idea was approved by most, and Teclis overlooked the construction of the colleges and taught the first human masters the arts of magic.

There are now eight colleges, each one dealing with a particular aspect of magic. The wizards most commonly used by generals in battle are those from the Bright Order, who study the Lore of Fire and Pyromancy. They wield flames like swords, and their violent spells are a boon to any general who wants to cause great damage and demonstrate the power at his command.

Courage and Faith

Asavar Kul brought many foul siege engines with him to bring down the walls of Praag.

KISLEV BESIEGED. Magnus was on the borders of Kislev when the tidings reached him that the capital city was under siege. This was terrible news. The garrison at Kislev was considerable, but not enough to contest with Kul's horde in open battle.

There was nothing for it but to march on Kislev and break the siege before the walls fell. The magnitude of the situation was lost on no one, from the highest general to the lowest baggage boy. The fate of the Empire, and the lands beyond, rested on them reaching Kislev and destroying the Chaos army. As they neared the city through forest and across tundra, they heard more rumours of Chaos activity. Chaos ships plied the Sea of Claws, attacking vessels taking supplies to Kislev, and the river Lynsk had turned to a wallowing stream of pus. Daemons cavorted about the land, and many believed that the End of Times was upon them.

By the end of spring, Magnus was within spitting distance of Kislev. Many brave scouts had slipped out of the city with messages for Magnus. The few that survived said that the Tzar bid them hurry, for he did not think they could hold out much longer. The city was full to bursting with refugees, and food was getting scarce. The Chaos hordes swarmed around the walls, assaulting them every day. Kul threw vast numbers of his warriors at Kislev's mighty walls, heedless of the losses; he had men enough to waste. But the constant fighting was taking its toll on the Kislevites and time was running short.

FIRST SIGHT OF THE ENEMY. The army marched into the lands surrounding Kislev, choosing to take the roads through the thick pine forests that curtain the high ground and ridge that leads down onto the plain where the great city lies. Companies of lancers and scouts were sent ahead to clear the way of any Chaos sentries and camps; Magnus wanted to take the enemy by surprise. The element of surprise is of key importance for any general. If you can attack an enemy who is unprepared and disorganised, the battle is half won.

The Chaos warlords drew up their plans against the forces of Kislev, unaware of the muster of Magnus from the Empire.



When Magnus and his scouts reached the edge of the ridge, they looked down on the Chaos host and learned that the reports of its size had not been exaggerated. Nothing could have prepared them for the sight that met their eyes. Kislev lay two miles distant, and she looked like an island in a black, churning sea. Surrounding her lofty walls of red stone boiled the Chaos host: thousands upon thousands of warriors dressed in animal skins and black armour and companies of horsemen galloping under the stern turrets, whooping and screaming at the murder and terror they created.

Siege engines lurked like huge insects behind the picket line, hurling rocks, corpses and fire barrels over the walls. The scars of the bombardment were plain to see on the proud towers and spires of the wounded city, and amongst the throng capered creatures no man should have to witness: the foul daemon-spawn of Chaos, the living embodiment of all that is evil and the reason made flesh as to why we must fight against them with all our zest.

On the breeze carried the stench of fire and death, and the sound of men crying and roaring in anger and fear. Walls cracked and sagged under the onslaught of boulders, and those inside laboured to fill in the gaps.

Kislevite soldiers fought on the ramparts, shooting and struggling to hurl back scaling ladders. A huge battering ram was being wheeled towards the main gate past the remains of two others, crushed by boulders and set alight with fire arrows. The assault on the city was in full swing and although the defenders fought hard, it could only be a matter of time until they fell before the vast strength of the Chaos horde.

Chaos Wastes

The Great War Against Chaos was fought in 2302. Chaos armies overran Praag, sacked the port of Erengard, and besieged Kislev. They were eventually defeated by a force of men and dwarfs, led by Magnus the Pious, High King Alriksson and Ar-Ulric Kriestov. Afterwards, Magnus the Pious became Emperor and re-united the Empire.



This map and the one overleaf were commissioned by the reigning monarch of Kislev, the Tzarina Katarin, to commemorate the mighty efforts of Tzar Alexis Romanov in the victory over the Chaos hordes.



1 The Imperial Advance

Primary Actions

1. The Empire Army splits
2. The Dwarf Throng encounters the Chaos Reserves
3. The Empire attacks. The besieging Chaos Horde breaks from its picket lines to meet the attack
4. The victorious Dwarfs rush to aid the desperate Empire forces
5. The Ice Queen strikes from Kislev, smashing into Chaos forces advancing to the front line
6. The Chaos Horde, now surrounded, is slaughtered

To Erengard

2

Vyanko Escarpment

Lorovsk

Shuraki Forest

3

River Urekov

The Ba





The Kislevites Sally Forth

5

6



A Pictorial Map
of the
BATTLE OF KISLEV GATE

It tells the
Last Battle
of the
GREAT WAR AGAINST CHAOS
Drawn by the
Best Authorities
And presented to
Her Royal Majesty

TZARINA KATARIN BOKHA

Long may she rule

Kislev Gate



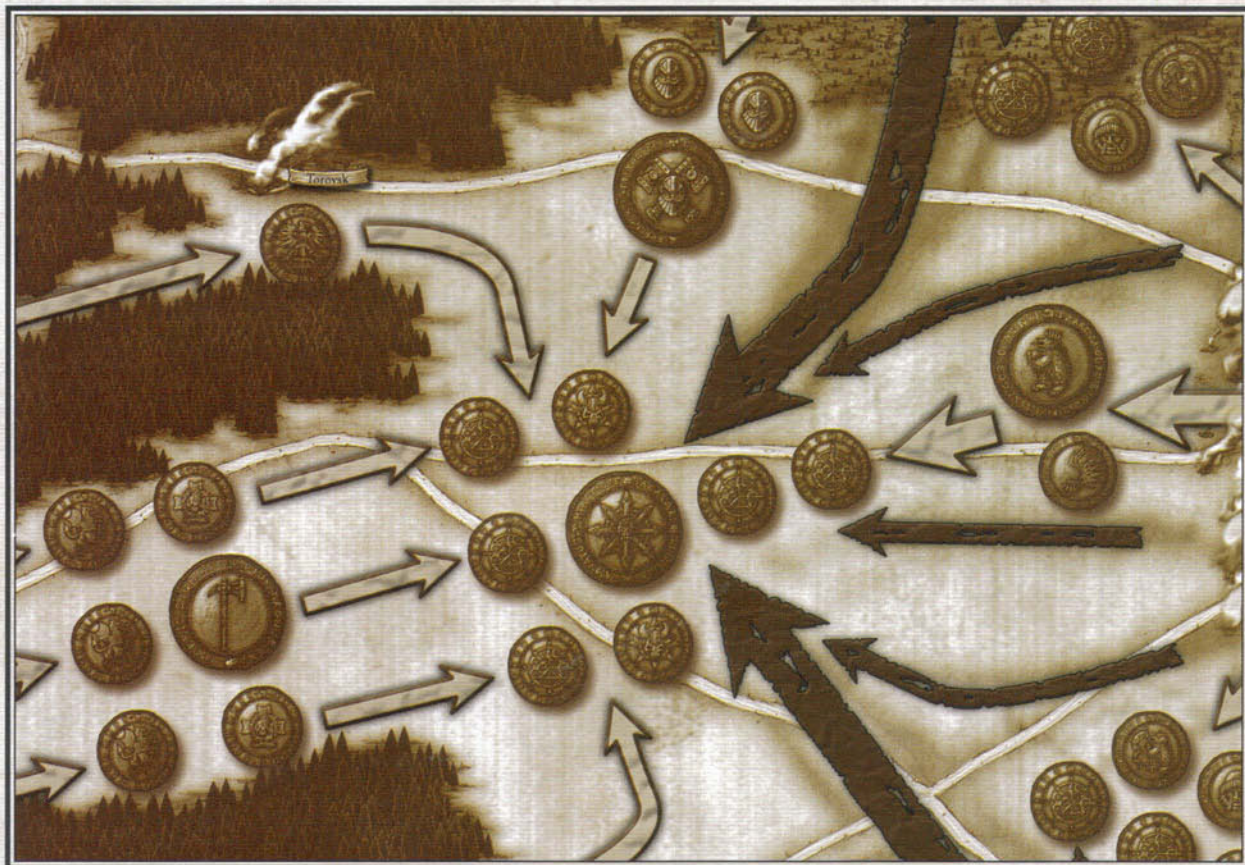
Courage and Faith

A number of dwarfs, seeking to relieve the beleaguered Kislevites, were forced to retreat into the city of Kislev. This illustration is a fanciful depiction of the besieged dwarfs fashioning a plan to escape the city and attack the Chaos forces beyond its walls.

A DIVISIVE STRATEGY. As the Empire and dwarf armies congregated behind the ridge, Magnus called his generals together. He suggested a two-pronged attack on the besieging army. He wanted to force Kul to redeploy in order to see off the Empire army. The dwarfs could then take advantage of the confusion and attack from the north, and if the gods were with them, they would link up with the horse-bound Kislevite force that had arrived too late to save Praag and was now wending its way southward, towards them. Hopefully, the forces within Kislev itself would lend their aid by breaking out of the city; then the Chaos army would be disorganised and attacked from three sides; the besiegers would become the besieged.

Some advisors opposed the plan, saying their best hope was to keep the armies together so they could hit hard and with full strength, but Magnus overruled them. 'A battle of strength we would surely lose,' he said. 'A battle of courage and guile we will win.' Despite some dissenting voices, the strategy was agreed. As the Empire army marched to Kislev in battle array, the dwarfs would hurry north, following the ridge, destroy the Chaos baggage train, and fall on the enemy when they were fully engaged.

In quick time and throughout the night, Magnus organised his army to battle readiness and after a few hours sleep, they were ready to march at dawn. The dwarfs had already left. Magnus had drilled his army constantly every night,



With the Empire army advancing, the Chaos warlord Asavar Kul would be forced to redeploy his forces to meet the threat. Once engaged, the Empire force would then be supported by the dwarf and Kislevite army, counter-attacking from the north, in the hope to break the Chaos horde on the end of a two-pronged attack.

Courage and Faith

and the training paid off as they emerged from the pine-covered ridge. Kislevite sentries cheered as the rescue force appeared and their hearts lifted with fresh hope.

Magnus had to form his army up for battle swiftly, before the enemy was ready to attack. It's impossible to hide an army of size from an enemy for long, and Kul had got wind of the Empire force in the early hours of the morning. But they had the same deployment problems as the Empire.

Kul responded to the new threat, and drew huge numbers of warriors from his picket line around the city to see off Magnus. By mid-morning, two hosts faced each other across the plain. Magnus had assembled his army in good order and was the first to order the advance, his infantry taking up the front, cavalry on the flanks and archers to the rear. The, as of yet, untested battle wizards, under the guidance of the high elf mage lord, Teclis and two other high mages, prepared to unleash their magics. Kul was disorganised in his strategy to deal with the new threat, and his army milled around in some confusion with only the barest semblance of order. After days of failed attempts to breach the walls of Kislev, the Chaos warriors just wanted to fight someone on level ground. They jogged eagerly towards the orderly Empire ranks, their line ragged and broken. As they got closer, the Empire commanders cast nervous glances to the north, waiting for the appearance of the second army.

A NASTY SURPRISE. The dwarf army made its way as swiftly as it could through the pine forests. They were to head east behind a steep hill and then fall on the Chaos flank from the north after destroying the baggage train. It was to be the hammer blow to wreck the Chaos army as it threw itself at the Empire front, but they had not reckoned on the sheer strength of the Chaos army.

Far from committing his entire army to the siege, Kul was keeping a huge reserve force behind the hill, feeding his front ranks as losses were taken. Dwarfs and Chaos were as



Dwarf rangers cleared the way through the forest for the army to reach the unprepared Chaos reserves.

surprised as the other when the first Ironbreaker regiments emerged out of the forests.

Chaos captains shouted orders and marauders hurriedly strapped on their armour and struggled to saddle their mounts. The dwarfs were already prepared and as soon as they had formed regimented ranks, they charged into the disorganised Chaos reserves. The dwarfs had the initial advantage, but the Chaos army was huge and as the first into the fray met the dwarf charge, those behind quickly asserted themselves and moved in to deal with the invaders. The dwarfs knew that any delay in helping the Empire army under Kislev's walls would spell disaster for the allies, so they set about fighting with the disciplined fury and implacable stubbornness which their race is so famous for.

I fought alongside a dwarf army many years ago against a huge host of orcs. We were greatly outnumbered, but the regiments of dwarfs kept cohesion, like steel islands in the sea of green, their armour turning blows and their spirit unwavering. It was a privilege to witness such stalwart courage. Magnus was fortunate to have dwarfs fighting with him.



The formidable Iron Breaker regiments were the first to emerge from the forest to do battle with the Chaos horde.

Courage and Faith

ASLAUGHTER WITHOUT COMPARE. Magnus's army was so large and the enemy he faced so chaotic and savage, that he kept his tactics simple. His infantry would hold the Chaos line in place while the cavalry dealt with the Chaos horses, after which they would swing round into the infantry line.

Under the walls of Kislev, the armies met. Magnus held no reserves back and committed every company he had to the fight. The army he faced was so vast, with more warriors arriving all the time from the picket line, that without using his full strength he would have been overrun. He had to hold out until the dwarfs arrived.

The line ebbed and flowed as thousands of mortal enemies fought and died. The air was thick with the cries of the defiant and the screams of the dying. Eldritch lightning cracked and fire scorched the air as Chaos sorcerers, battle wizards and mages cast their devastating spells. From Kislev's ramparts, archers poured fire down onto the backs of the Chaos warriors. Magnus's knights charged, retreated, reformed and charged again, but their numbers were thinned by the arrows of the hundreds of marauder horse archers who rode swiftly and forever out of reach. Magnus fought with his men, and he could see that his dwindling line was on borrowed time; the intolerable pressure exerted by the massed Chaos ranks would soon break them. If that happened, they would all be lost.

Who can imagine the carnage of that day? The bitter fighting that raged across miles of steppe: the stink of smoke and blood, the din as steel clashed on steel and men in the throes of primal fury bellowed and roared, the pain of seeing comrades die and the rage and fear that it inspired in men's guts. I have experienced more combat than most men, but my writing skills are insufficient to portray the brutal reality of war and the fearful array of emotions that

In the swirling melee no quarter was given.

It seemed as if nothing could stop the rampaging army of Asavar Kul.



combat awakens in a man's breast. War is hell, but survivors of Kislev's Gate say they went deeper than hell that day.

From the ramparts, the Tzar could see that the Empire army was losing. He knew that if he opened the gates and the day was lost, Kislev would fall. But if he stayed in his walls and left the Empire army to its fate they may survive a while longer. He consulted his court, but she knew that she could not leave the men outside to die. It was agreed, and he ordered that all fighting men and women should gather by Kislev's gate, ready to fall on the enemy.

As the order was given and the soldiers and citizens of Kislev, alongside their dwarfs allies within the city, eagerly waited for the gates to open, a trumpet sounded from the ramparts. Another army was in sight to the north. The Tzar's heart fell: more Chaos warriors? No: they were dwarfs and an army of Kislevite horse, bloodied but spoiling for another fight. They had cut through the Chaos reserve army with savage precision, and although they had taken heavy losses and the Kislevites were exhausted from their desperate ride, they hurled themselves at the Chaos flank with all the relish and energy of fresh reinforcements. It was the moment the tide of battle changed.

Kislev's gate ground open and with ecstatic cheers the people poured out and crashed into the Chaos horde. The Kislevites' hearts were full of hatred for their tormentors. For weeks they had fought, feared, starved and struggled in their beloved city, with only the prospect of death awaiting them. But now they had their chance to hit back and send the foul heathen to their many-tiered hell.

Beset from three sides, the Chaos army foundered under the assault, but Kul was a cunning commander and his hold over his army was strong. Not one of his warriors would surrender; it would be a fight to the death.

Courage and Faith



Such were the forces brought to bear in the great battle outside Kislev's Gate that the skies grew black and lightning streaked the horizon. Truly, this was a battle that would decide the fate of the world.

Courage and Faith

A CARPET OF DEATH. Any semblance of tactics disappeared in the ferocity of battle. Kul ordered all the besieging elements of his army to engage the allies. The battle raged over many square miles and the ground was covered with the dead and wounded. Kislev emptied as every citizen joined the fray, using any weapon that came to hand. Women used butcher's knives, old folk lashed out with crutches, even children did their bit to liberate their city.

Cavalry mounted charge after charge and Magnus and his generals fought with their men, inspiring them to acts of unsurpassed courage. Deeds of such great sacrifice were committed every minute, deeds worthy of songs and legend, all but forgotten in the enormous confusion of the conflict.

War brings out the best and worst in men; it must be the extreme nature of it that tips men one way or the other. I have seen men flee, weeping and soiling their britches, leaving their comrades to die. I have seen militia levies, some no more than boys, stay to fight and defend their homes against insurmountable odds, while professional soldiers run for the hills in panic. The souls of men are brittle, and no one can know how they will react in the heat of battle.

The sun began to set behind the horizon, perhaps sickened by the sight of so much blood and death as the battle

ebbed and flowed. Magnus realised his army was balanced finely between victory and abject defeat. His men were tiring, but the Chaos forces were fired with fear of their vengeful gods and of Kul, who fought like a daemon possessed in the thick of the battle.

Magnus struggled out of the melee, calling to his cavalry to follow him. He sent out riders to gather every horseman they could find and order them to muster on the hills to the south. An hour later, and as the sun finally dipped below the horizon, Magnus stood in front of his host of horsemen: Reiklandguard, White Wolves, Blazing Suns, horse archers, winged lancers and pistoliers. They covered two hills, and they all listened as Magnus rallied them with a speech which put fire in their hearts.

Below them raged the battle, a cauldron of hatred given action. Chaos warriors swarmed over the dead, and in the middle strode Kul, swinging his mighty war axe, severing limbs and killing with every swipe. Magnus wanted the cavalry to inflict a killing blow on the Chaos army. His plan was to hit them hard and fast in the flank, and on such a wide front that the devastation among them would be impossible to recover from. With a blast from a hundred war horns, the cavalry charged down the hill.

Here depicted is the current ruler of Kislev, the Ice Queen Katerin. The pride and nobility of her forbears is echoed in her stern countenance.



Courage and Faith

Magnus led them, his blade held aloft. The thunder of several thousand horses reverberated against the walls of Kislev. Kul turned and saw his doom approaching. The cavalry lowered their lances and struck the Chaos army and buried itself deep into its flank. Marauders and Chaos beasts fell like reeds in a storm, helpless against the unrelenting momentum of the massed cavalry. Seeing new hope, the infantry fought even harder, forgetting their weariness and their wounds.

Magnus made for Kul, his armoured warhorse kicking and rearing against the terrified Chaos warriors. Kul turned to face him, his mouth twisted in an expression of hatred. Magnus pitted his magical sword against Kul's daemon-possessed axe, and these two mighty warlords fell on each other in mortal combat. It was said that Magnus fought with strength and passion not seen since Sigmar battled the orcs at Black Fire Pass. Scholars agree that where Kul was infected with the demented power of his dark gods, Magnus was filled with Sigmar's strength and martial skill; on that battlefield, Sigmar fought again.

Sparks flew from the ancient weapons, and the grunts and cries of exertion from the wielders carried even over the tumult of battle. They fought for a long time, and it was night before Magnus feinted a cut to Kul's head, dropped the blade and sliced off his arm through the join in his armour. Kul dropped to his knees, his hand pressed against



Grand Master of the Knights Panther.

the squirting stump, looking up in time to see Magnus's blade sweep towards his neck to strike off his head.

The Chaos gods saw their servant bested and left their bereft army to be slaughtered by the rampant allies. Kislev was saved and Magnus became a hero.

The Knights Panther; one of the orders that combined in a great muster of cavalry to break the Chaos horde.



Courage and Faith

CONCLUSION AND LEGACY. After the victory at Kislev's Gate, the work was far from over. Many Chaos warriors and creatures escaped and had to be hunted down. It was many months before the land around Kislev was considered safe, but I am certain that many escaped the nets. Kislev had suffered badly at the hands of Kul's army, and there were many more battles to the north. But the cohesion that bound the Chaos warbands together had been broken the moment Kul's head rolled across the battlefield, and the united forces of men and dwarfs eventually rid the lands of Chaos invaders.

A huge invasion of the mortal lands had been halted, and the forces of Chaos retreated back to the north to lick their wounds and reflect on their defeat. But men and dwarfs had paid a high price. Thousands died, and the cost Kislev paid was enormous. But they are a hardy folk and have survived for many years and will continue to do so for many more.

The most important and valuable legacy of this battle was that Magnus returned to the Empire as an all conquering hero. No one disputed his claim to take on the mantle of Emperor, and for the first time in many centuries the Empire was ruled by one man, as it has been ever since.

Under his leadership the Empire grew strong once again. The lesson taught by Sigmar was remembered: men will only survive if they stand together. Magnus forged our race back into a unified and coherent power, unafraid of any enemy. The legacy of the Battle of Kislev's Gate was the continued survival of the human race.



The many knightly orders that fought in the Great War Against Chaos.



Courage and Faith



Though crudely rendered, this image, of the Ice Queen and Magnus the Pious, was presented to the current reigning ruler of Kislev, Tsarina Katarin, at her coronation. Though Katarin was not even born at the time of the Great War, some Empire scholars believe that it is an ancient tradition of Kislev to depict a new ruler at the scene of a great victory of the past in the hope that the omens of such battles would bring prosperity and fortune to their reign.

Unity of Forces

The Battle of Black Fire Pass

'The sheer ferocity of the attack caused a shudder down the orc line. Seeing it buckle, Sigmar put his war horn to his lips, blew a rallying cry and his men redoubled their efforts. Sigmar's heart leapt as he saw Queen Freya's chariots crash through the orc line, sending broken bodies spinning through the air as the scythed wheels sliced through bone and hacked off legs. The charioteers loosed off arrow after arrow, each finding its mark with deadly accuracy. The orcs fell back in disarray.'

— *The Life of Sigmar*



Unity of Forces



AN IMPORTANT LESSON. The Battle of Black Fire Pass is the most important battle fought by men. The immediate implications of Sigmar's famous victory are obvious: the largest orc army ever mustered was destroyed before it could rampage across our land, but the most important legacy of the battle was that it forged a unity between the disparate tribes of men.

Through the shared danger and ultimate victory, men discovered their common goal: survival. And they learned that it would best be achieved by working together. Sigmar recognised this long before the orcs began mustering in the gullies and ravines of Black Fire Pass, but it took the threat of the end of humanity to teach the other chiefs the same lesson.

The Empire that we live in today, with its elected Emperor, elector counts, its roads, trade, armies, universities, arts, culture, printing presses and safety is a direct result of the guiding hand of Sigmar, and of the union of men he forged in that historic time.

Unity of forces within an army is essential. Armies are complex entities, and each individual piece, be it a lance of

knights, a battery of guns or a unit of scouts, must be able to work independently but also as part of the greater whole. To be most effective, soldiers must have a common goal, a reason to fight, something that they all share. A motivated soldier is worth three who believe they fight for no reason.

Armies in this age are comprised of many types of people; no army is ever the same. In my time, I have commanded peasant levies armed with staves and scythes, mercenaries from Tilea and Estalia, professional gunners from Nuln, halflings, Reiksguard knights, regiments of professional spearmen and regular greatswords. These men came from all states, from all walks of life and were inhibited by all the natural distrusts and prejudices held against anyone not from their town or city. Yet I forged them into cohesive, disciplined armies and I did this by providing a common goal and instilling a pride in their hearts for the army they served in.

I learned this from Sigmar.

Unity of Forces

A LAND DIVIDED. In Sigmar's time, the land that we now call the Empire was divided into many tribes and factions. These tribes were fiercely independent, watching each other through eyes narrowed with distrust. These petty kingdoms fought because of ancient feuds or new opportunities for personal gain, and so it had been for thousands of years. War was a way of life, and central to their survival. The weak had no place in Sigmar's day.

However, things were beginning to change. War was constant, but men were starting to understand the benefits of trade. Roads made travel easier, and tribes began to communicate, barter and develop ties with each other and the elves and dwarfs. The first seeds of a unified nation were being sown, but the roots were still shallow and easily disturbed and one man saw it was time to instigate the change wholeheartedly.

Sigmar, warlord of the Unberogen tribe, recognised the strength of diplomacy as well as the sword. Through a mixture of alliances, trade, threats and conquest, he began a process of unification across the lands, which finally came to fruition when the battle lines were formed at the Battle of Black Fire Pass.

THE STORM BEFORE THE HURRICANE. In the years before the Battle of Black Fire Pass, the lands of men were beset by devastating attacks by orcs and goblins. Greenskins poured in unprecedented numbers from the mountains to the east and west and the smell of a weakening foe's blood drove the orcs mad for our final destruction. Our race was in dire peril.

After years of debilitating war, Sigmar and his allies managed to push the invading armies south across the rivers Stir and Aver, but the land between the Black Mountains and the Grey Mountains was completely lost to the enemy. Towns starved under sieges, and those who escaped fled north or hid in the depths of the forests. Roads became choked with refugees, and Sigmar ordered that everyone should receive shelter. But how long could he promise protection? The foe grew stronger as more of them came down from the mountains, eager to plunder and destroy the reeling tribes of men.

Sigmar had already forged alliances with many powerful tribes, and for the most part they fought side by side in their quest to drive the orcs from their lands. But the greenskin tide was relentless and many believed that the end of the world was coming. Men were no longer facing disunited orc tribes who were as likely to squabble and fight amongst themselves as against men. Unthinkably, the orcs were united in their quest to completely crush humanity and it seemed unlikely that even the combined forces of men would not be able to hold them back.

As humanity's fate balanced on a razor's edge, Sigmar called on his old ally King Kurgan Ironbeard, the dwarf king he had saved from orcs and who had gifted him Ghal Maraz. True to his oath of allegiance, Ironbeard came to Sigmar's aid and the orcs were crushed between their armies at the Battle of the Aver. The greenskins fled to Black Fire Pass, and for a time peace descended on the war-torn land.

This map depicts the tribal domains of the humans during the time of Sigmar. Though the borders of each tribe are depicted as firmly defined, it is likely that such realms were much more nebulous and as such the borders presented are only a guide to how the land was divided.





Unity of Forces

ADIRE WARNING TAKEN. The southern lands were ruined, and all efforts were made to rebuild towns and sow the fields. Further war was dreaded by the battered populace, but war was quick to brew again. It was hoped that the orcs would disappear into the mountains, leaderless and broken, never to trouble men again, but it was not long before orc raiding parties sallied forth from their mountain strongholds and human blood once more soaked into the land.

It was Sigmar's old ally, the dwarf king Kurgan Ironbeard that first petitioned the human lord for his aid. Orcs in huge numbers were amassing in their mountains, led by the warlord known only as 'Bloodstorm', and sought to break through Black Fire Pass. The dwarfs were struggling to hold back the terrible horde, despite building a mighty wall to protect the pass. In his camp near Nuln, did Sigmar receive King Ironbeard's plea. The orcs sought revenge for their recent defeat, and they had the strength to find it.

Sigmar called together the tribe leaders to council. It became known as the Council of Eleven, and it was attended by Sigmar of the Unberogens and Teutogens, King Marbad of the Endals, King Otwin of the Thuringians, King Aloysius of the Cherusens, King Krugar of the Taleutens, Queen Freya of the Asoborns, King Siggurd of the Brigundiäns, King Markus of the Menogoths, King Henroth of the of the Merogens, King Adelhard of the Ostagoths and King Wolfila of the Udoes.

These tribal kings, proud and independent, faced a foe unified against them. Sigmar convinced them that the only way to survive was to fight together. It was agreed that their armies would prepare over the winter, and come the spring, would take war to the enemy.

SIGMAR'S HAMMER. In spring, in the devastated lands of the Merogens in the south, there mustered an army the like of which had never been seen before, or likely since. The warriors of all the tribes gathered together on Bloodmoss Plain, thousands and thousands of men

and women, united under Sigmar and sharing a common purpose. The army was named Sigmar's Hammer, and with it he would crush the greenskin menace.

Armies were very different in Sigmar's day, when war was a central part of every man's life (and in some tribes also the women's). It was a brutal time when men fought neighbouring tribes, orcs, beastmen and the dark creatures that lived in the forests. Life was short and ended often in violence; a natural death was considered a luxury by some, and as rather unmanly by others.

Each tribe leader had his bodyguard, the tribe's strongest warriors, paid for and equipped by the warlord. They wore ornate bronze armour and carried iron shields, spears, axes, and swords if they could afford it. They sometimes fought on horseback, but in those days war was ruled by the infantry. Horses were rare and expensive, and only began to be used extensively in battle with the introduction of the stirrup and the lance.

I have long admired the folk of our past, and revere them for their resourcefulness, courage and ingenuity. Some scholars portray our ancestors as little more than skin-wearing savages, but this is simply not the case. They were people with a rich, vibrant and artistic culture: they made intricate jewelry, pottery and tapestries and beautifully crafted weapons and armour were wrought with swirling patterns and depictions of battles, feasts, hunts and their savage war gods.

The ale they brewed would probably fell the hardest drinker of today. Their society was geared to war, but that was the necessity in the dangerous world they inhabited, where life was fleeting and hard fought.

But the main reason that these amazing folk have earned by undying respect is this: they survived, and for that we owe them everything.

When a tribe marched to war, the bulk of the army was comprised of warbands. These warbands were close-knit units, and family members always fought alongside one another. They had their own banners, iconography and swore allegiance to their tribe and warlord. These men fought with large wooden shields and spears.

The savage orc tribes gathered in their thousands in the mountains. Nothing would stop them advancing on Black Fire Pass.



Unity of Forces



An artist's rendition of one of the feral greenskins in the horde of the warlord, 'Bloodstorm'. Note the stone club and bone axe, crude but brutal weapons.

Woad Warriors

There were many warrior cults in Sigmar's day and they were a direct product of a society that (necessarily) embraced war and battle as essential parts of life. These bands of men and women practiced their bizarre fighting techniques and battle rituals which consisted of a rich mixture of martial brilliance, unusual weaponry and psychological warfare.

Naked fanatics were to be found all over the land. They had a fearsome reputation in battle, and were renowned for fighting wearing nothing but swirling patterns of blue dye called woad. They covered their face in ash to give them a skull-like appearance. They would spend the night before battle dancing round fires and walking through hot coals to show their immunity to pain.

It was their belief that their war god would protect them in battle. Wearing any sort of armour (or any clothing at all) was considered extremely disrespectful to their god. Their appearance on

the battlefield, in all their disconcerting nakedness, had a profound effect on their enemies. They carried shields with spikes on the top and bottom which they used to skewer opponents.

Berserkers were a rare breed of warriors. These brutal men were born fighters, and war was the central component of their lives. They were famous for their battle rage, which rendered them immune to pain, and allowed them to ignore wounds that would incapacitate a normal man.

They achieved their higher state of rage by imbibing an elixir, the ingredients of which have been lost in the mist of time. Before battle they would drink the elixir from the skull of a fallen enemy and then dance, bite their shields, and scream and bellow at each other, working themselves up into a fury. When they reached a crescendo of battle-lust, they would launch themselves at their foe, mindless of fear, pain or death. Often their sheer fury of their charge would be enough to break their foe's spirit.

DEPLOYMENT. It was a courageous and sound strategy to take the war to the enemy. By attacking, you maintain the initiative and can choose the terrain and time of the battle; it was a maxim taught to me from an early age, and it served me well throughout my career. Sigmar knew that the orcs far outnumbered his army; we do not know how many combatants fought on that fateful day, but there is little doubt that it ran into the hundreds of thousands. Sigmar led his mile-long columns into Black Fire Pass. Drums beat, trumpets bellowed and men shouted and sang. The tramp of feet, the thump of hooves and the rumble of chariot wheels echoed between the high valley walls. Sigmar wanted the orcs to hear them coming, and to know that his men had no fear.

Sigmar had chosen his battleground carefully and it was imperative he reached it and deployed before the orcs had a chance to react. Three miles into the pass, the valley splits in two. Before that point, the valley narrows and a line of vast boulders stretch across its width. No one knows how they got there (they are still present today) but some scholars believe they were placed there by prehistoric man in reverence to their gods. Others say the gods put them there to aid Sigmar in his task. Whatever the case, Sigmar saw their strategic worth and based his battle plan around them.

Sigmar had to counter the numerical advantage that the orcs held. The valley floor was two miles wide, flat and rocky. The valley walls sloped up gently then rose sheer for hundreds of feet. Sigmar's battle line needed to stretch from wall to wall, allowing no gaps or weak point for the orcs to exploit. The boulders solved several problems.

Warbands formed up between the boulders, with reserves to the rear. Their flanks were secured with solid rock and splitting the line meant that if one warband broke

and fled, it was less likely to affect the rest of the line. Using the boulders, the army stretched from one valley wall to the other. It also reduced the frontage of Sigmar's army, ensuring that the orcs could not make their superior numbers pay as well as they would like. It was a brilliant way to take advantage of the terrain. Stone throwers were deployed to the rear on a slight rise and in front of them were the archers.

Where the valley sloped up to the sheer cliffs, the ground was broken up with rocks, trees and shrubs, and it was unsuitable for massed infantry ranks. Sigmar deployed his skirmishers there: javelin hurlers, stone-slingers and archers. These men were charged with pouring missiles down onto the orc regiments as they advanced and engaging any enemy skirmishers who might seek to exploit the main battle line's vulnerable flanks.

In front of the shieldwall, Sigmar placed his most ferocious warriors: the berserkers, naked fanatics, headthrowers, bladder hurlers, firebreathers, gutters, wailing harpies and the wildkin. At the vanguard of the army were the cavalry.

Taking up the centre, and providing a hub of strength was the heavy cavalry, including Sigmar's bodyguard. On the right were Queen Freya's chariots, and on the left the light cavalry. It is hard for the historian to guess numbers – there are no written sources from the time – but it is safe to assume that Sigmar's cavalry numbered several thousand. This quote is from the epic tale the *Saga of Sigmar*, rendered into prose, which does much to illustrate the glorious sight of Sigmar's cavalry:

'The men cheered as the horses cantered eagerly forward. Their heads were proud and high, and their manes danced in the breeze. The bright barding that covered their flanks whipped and flowed, and the icons of the tribes caught the sun and burned with internal fire. The riders, straight-backed and grim-faced, held their spears and swords aloft in gestures of defiance. Queen Freya rode foremost in her high-sided chariot that gleamed so brightly with gold and bronze that it hurt the eyes to look at. The valley trembled under the stamp of fifty thousand horses.'

The number is surely exaggerated, but the description is probably accurate. Imagine the sight in your mind's eye! It should make any general proud.



The smaller greenskins, goblins, acted as scouts for the horde.

Battle of Black Fire Pass

Valley Wall

Pass Entrance
to Bloodmoss Plain

Valley Floor

Deployment



Dwarfs



Infantry



Missile
Troops



Cavalry



Chariots



Catapults



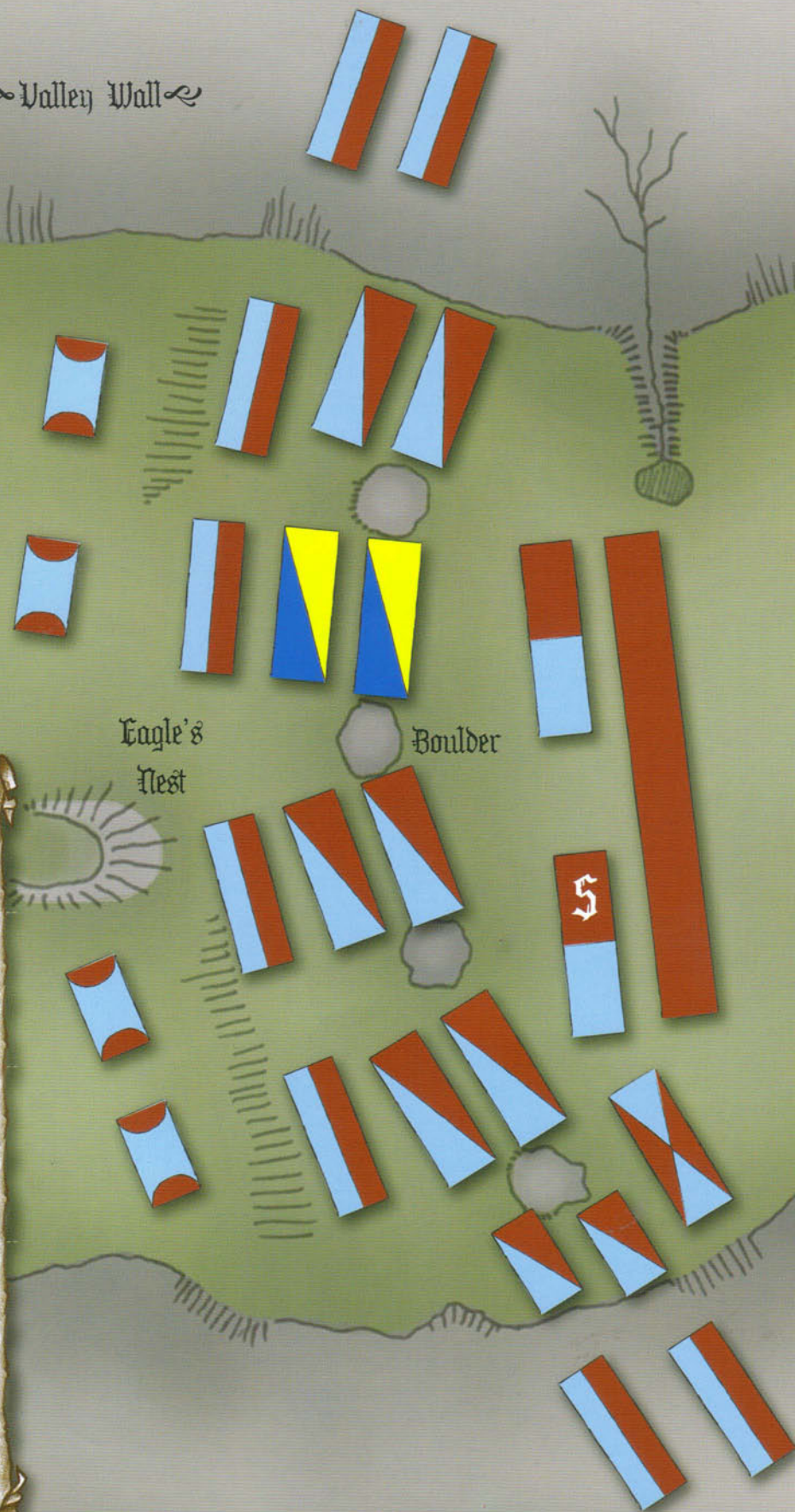
Berserkers



Sigmar

Eagle's
Nest

Boulder



∞ Battle of ∞ Black Fire Pass

This artistic rendition of the battle seeks only to capture the essence of the conflict, rather than depict the sheer number of forces arrayed against each other. It is suitably archaic in its presentation, reflecting the ancient time of its subject.





The Shieldwall

The shieldwall is an ancient battle formation first developed before the birth of the Empire and still used today in some quarters. The premise of this strong defensive formation is simple and is descended from the phalanx, but where the phalanx is a moving formation, the shieldwall is static. Foot soldiers stand in lines, shoulder to shoulder, preferably with their flanks protected and on high ground, with their front facing the enemy. The men in the front rank hold their shields so they abut and overlap to form a solid wall of wood and iron. This way the protective potential of the shield is fully realised, as each man benefits from the protection of his neighbour's shield as well as his own.

A well-drilled shieldwall can repel attacks from infantry, cavalry and archers. From behind their solid wall, men can thrust their spears, hack down with axes, fire arrows, sling stones or hurl rocks.

Within the Empire, the shieldwall is not often used as the style of infantry fighting has advanced. There is less emphasis on defensive tactics now and with the growing use of firearms the wooden shield is becoming obsolete.

Orcs, being a primitive race, use a version of the shieldwall. They hold their shields together on the charge, only breaking formation in the final yards. However, orcs are not disciplined enough to use them with the skill and aplomb of our ancient ancestors.

Today, the most successful proponents of the shieldwall are the dwarfs as it suits their style of warfare. dwarfs are not swift and have no cavalry; their main strength lies in their toughness and strength. However, getting to grips with an enemy can take time and leave them vulnerable to missile and cavalry attack. A well-armoured dwarf behind an advancing shieldwall is virtually invulnerable and when the enemy line is reached, their superior weapons can carve into the enemy with impunity.

Dwarfs have ever been disciplined and determined fighters. There are few who can break a dwarf shield wall.

THE ARMIES MEET. The sunlight was flooding one side of the valley when the orcs made themselves known. Sigmar had ordered his best scouts ahead to locate the whereabouts and strength of the enemy. None returned until the orcs sent them back in their own special way.

The valley was quiet. The only sound was the chink of armour, the snort of horses and the occasional cry of a warlord geeing up his men. Then, in the distance, came a bestial sound, the sound of man's oldest enemy in numbers uncountable: the tramp of iron-shod boots, the beating of huge war-drums, the clink of armour and weapons, the raucous snarls and bellows from thousand tusk-lined jaws, the clank of wheels as catapults were hauled into high crags and the creak as their arms were ratcheted back. The orcs were coming, and the ground quailed.

Orcs know well how to instil fear into their enemies. Many dismiss orcs as mere beasts, but they are not to be underestimated: beasts are cunning and wily, and so are orcs. They know that their brutal aspect and bestial nature frightens men, and they use this to their advantage. Never dismiss an orc as a stupid opponent, it will probably be the last mistake you will make.

As the first line of orcs marched into view, their catapults returned Sigmar's scouts. Some were still alive as they were



flung into the air, others had been dismembered or burnt. Orcs are born to fight, and they understand the debilitating power of fear. Tactics such as these are designed to weaken men's hearts, and Sigmar knew this well.

As the orcs marched into the valley, their ranks met and stretched without break from one side to the other. Goblin spider and wolf riders darted among the rocks where the valley sloped up, eager and confident in their vast numbers. They halted when they were half a mile away. As the last echoes of their march died away and dust drifted in roiling waves, all eyes looked to the sky. A rhythmic thrumming sound carried on the breeze, like the wing beats of a giant bird.

The orc warboss came into view, skimming low over the heads of his warriors, mounted on an enormous wyvern. The orcs roared and crashed their spears against their chests as their leader – a savage and brutish black orc – settled his mount down on a crag overlooking the valley.

For a time the armies stared at each other, like fighters sizing each other up before trading blows. Sigmar waited to see if the orcs would advance. On the advice of his council, he had taken up position on the Eagle's Nest, a ruined watchtower on a spit of rock which allowed him a view of the field. He was about to order his cavalry forward when his wildest warriors took matters into their own hands.

Hails of crude, black-feathered arrows from the orc horde were met with wood and steel.





Unity of Forces

BERSERKER CHARGE. The berserkers charged, their hearts brimming with hatred and fury at the invaders. With howls of bestial fury, they loped towards the orc line. They had imbibed their elixir of war, and it flowed in their veins like fire: four hundred men, wearing no armour, sprinting towards the orc line. Seeing their brethren-in-war lead the way, the other wild men and women took up behind them.

Not understanding the nature of the foe they were facing, cackling goblin archers stepped out from cover and sighted down their bows. They fired volleys of missiles but to their horror every shaft missed; the berserkers' gods were powerful, and they protected their subjects that day. The goblins turned to flee as the terrifying men bore down on them, but they were too slow and they were butchered with scything swords and bludgeoning hammers. As they struck, the berserkers barely broke stride; their intended victims were not the snivelling goblins, they wanted orc flesh to cleave.

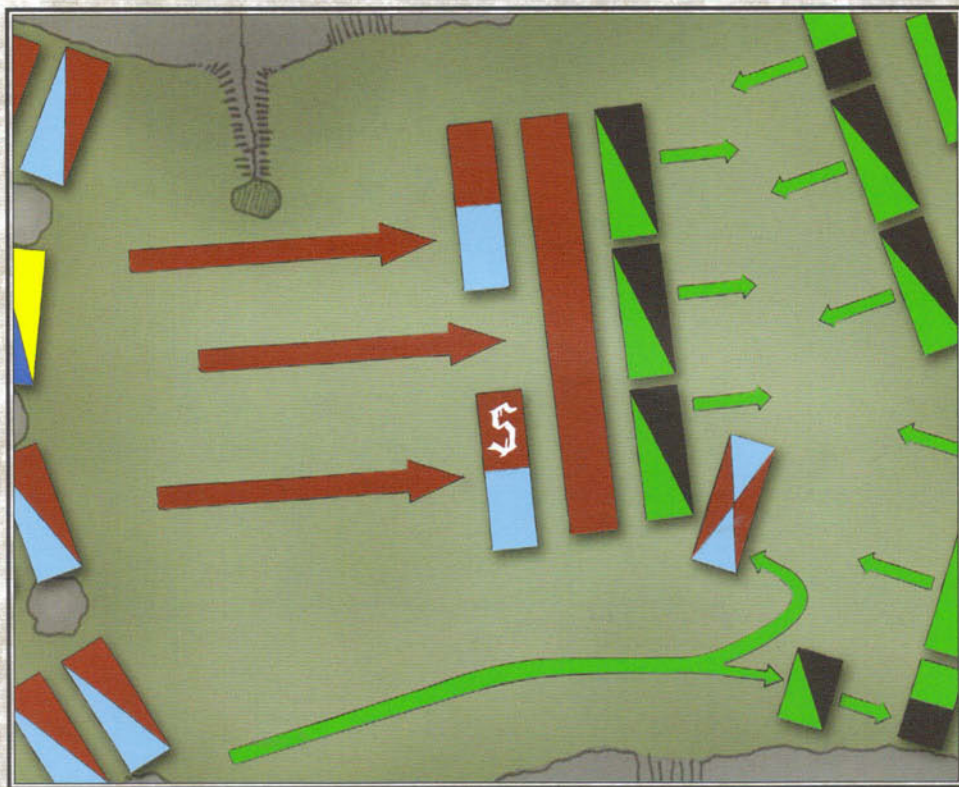
The orc warboss had forged together all the tribes into one cohesive army, which was why they posed such a threat. But orcs are a naturally unruly race, and even the warboss's iron will over his warriors had limits. The forward elements of his army saw the berserkers charging them and they could not resist meeting them on the plain. Thousands of them broke past the spear wall and with bestial roars, sped towards the berserkers.

Sigmar ordered his cavalry forward. 'I want those foul greenskins to walk over a mound of their own dead before they even reach my lines,' he said as his cavalry began to canter forward.

The berserkers and orcs met in combat with animal hatred burning in their breasts. Such was the furious assault meted out by the initial berserker attack that the orcs were thrown back. Naked fanatics leapt into the air, their hair streaming, blades slicing arcs around them, dismembering and decapitating with terrible speed. Bladder hurlers launched their corrosive missiles at the orcs, melting their faces then flew at them with hatchets. Wailing Harpies set about themselves with dirks and spikes made from antlers.

As every man, orc and goblin watched, the greenskin charge was halted in a matter of a few brutal moments. Some in the orc front line stepped backwards and men rejoiced at the sight. But the orc warboss saw an opportunity to strike back. The berserkers were stranded far in front of the cavalry, barely fifty yards from his front line and they were occupied with finishing off the last of the orcs and cutting trophies from the bodies. With a wave of his axe, he signalled the reforming front ranks to advance in formation.

Seeing the approaching danger, Sigmar knew the only hope of saving his wild men was a cavalry charge, but they were moving too slowly. He realised that his place was at the front of his army, not issuing orders safely behind it. Before his advisors could speak, he leapt on his horse and galloped into the valley, through the parting ranks of infantry and into the crush of his cavalry. Seeing their leader join them, their hearts leapt and they picked up the pace. Trumpets blasted and men cheered: Sigmar rode with them and before him none could stand.



Berserker Charge

Heedless of orders, the berserker warbands charge headlong into the greenskin advance force. Sigmar's cavalry and chariots follow in their stead. Such is the impact of the chariots that they break through and smash into the greenskin rear, breaking them.

Sigmar is victorious over the small advance force and the main orc army advances. Sigmar and his warriors beat a retreat, allowing the orcs to attack their prepared lines.

Unity of Forces

LIKE A SCYTHE THROUGH WHEAT. Sigmar wanted to stamp his authority onto the battle and enrage the orcs enough to draw them forward. When his cavalry smashed headlong into the advancing enemy, he achieved these aims.

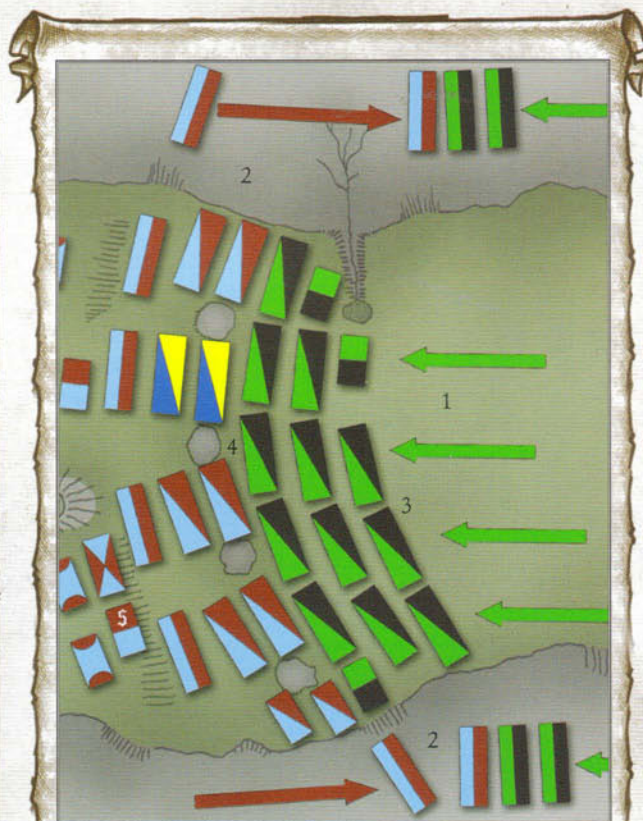
Many scholars believe – and celebratory tapestries made after the battle vouch for this idea – that it was one of the first times a large cavalry force used the couched lance. Up until this point, cavalymen usually hefted their spears over their shoulders or held them at arms length. But the Taleuten tribe, who were expert horsemen, had invented the stirrup and the raised saddle which greatly enhanced a rider's stability. As a consequence, they developed the technique of using a lance couched under the arm, as cavalymen do to this day. By doing this, the lance's hitting power was not limited to the bearer's strength of arm, but instead contained the full impetus of the charging steed. Sigmar had ordered all of his cavalymen to learn this technique before the battle.

It paid off. As the orcs advanced in ordered lines, shields to the front and spears lowered, they could not have expected the devastating power of the cavalry charge as it struck them. The front ranks were impaled on steel-tipped lances and then disappeared under a riot of hooves. Sigmar's heavy cavalry ripped into the orcs' centre, inspired by the war-lust of their leader. Sigmar whirled his hammer about him and the magic runes on the head glowed brightly as orc blood drenched it. The horses, trained to rear and crush with their hooves, battered at the cowering orcs, breaking skulls and mashing bones to pulp. Ulric shone on his warriors, as he had on the berserkers, and orc spears turned on barding or snapped on shields.

Warhorses are trained to fight, not just charge. I owned several horses in my years as a general, and they were all trained by the late, great Ludwig Hoberer. My favourite horse, Brown Bess, was sweet natured and obedient, until she smelt blood and battle (most Empire knights ride stallions, but I preferred mares due to their temperament). She was fearless on the charge, and when mired in combat, she would rear and lash out with her great hooves with deadly accuracy, aiming at faces and chests. She lies buried with my other steeds in the temple of Morr in my mansion grounds.

The orcs fared worst on the right. Queen Freya's chariots bumped over the rocky ground, their scythes whickering, the crew firing arrow after arrow at the increasingly nervous orcs. The rumble of the iron-rimmed wheels and the shrieking of the drivers was so disturbing that the orc line began to break as some tried to get behind their comrades. With a final volley of arrows, the chariots pierced the orc line wherever they hit. Legs were severed at the knees as the chariots hacked into the foe. Queen Freya shrieked with bloodlust as she cut and sliced with her razor-sharp swords. They broke the orcs with one charge, ran them down as they fled, then wheeled around to crash into the foundering orcs in the centre.

The arrival of the berserkers spelt the end of the orc attack. Between them, the cavalry and the wildmen destroyed the orc vanguard almost entirely, and those that



Loading the Orcs

1. The orcs chase Sigmar and his cavalry back to their lines. There begins a grinding battle that stretched the length of the field.

2. Sigmar's skirmishers heroically hold off a large force of wolf riders.

3. The massive numbers of greenskins cannot tell against the staggered alliance line as the majority of the greenskin regiments stack up at the rear.

4. Sigmar's leap into the fray, which turned the tide of the battle.

managed to reach their own lines were slaughtered by their disgusted brethren.

But the exultation of Sigmar's warriors was short-lived. For the first time they caught a glimpse of the sheer size of the orc host. More marched towards them in regiments so deep the final rank was lost in a swirling storm of dust. More outriders bounded from rock to rock on the valley walls. Orcs and goblins spilled from every cave and crevice in the valley, as if the rock was spewing them up in disgust. The orc army was advancing to attack as Sigmar desired, but even he had not imagined they had such numbers.

Sigmar ordered a retreat in good order to the shieldwall, where the real battle would be fought.

Right: Noble lord Sigmar, the first Emperor of the Empire. A record of some of his great deeds arrayed around him in tapestry.

THE TOIL AND GRIND. War is rarely glorious, quick or without cost. For the most part, war is brutal, terrifying and exhausting. It is about strength of body and will, and the outcome, especially in infantry clashes, depends on who breaks first.

Sigmar deployed his men in a position where their strength lay solely in defence. They could neither advance nor retreat without sacrificing this strength, as they relied on the boulders to anchor their line. His warbands could not use their manoeuvrability or skill in the charge to full advantage but the orcs would have to break the line to win. To do this they needed to find a weak point and punch a hole through, or sweep away the skirmishers protecting the flanks and attack there. To achieve their aims, each side had to win the Grind.

The Grind is an infantry term. It's the apt name given to the standing fight when two shieldwalls clash. As the lines push against each other, shields press together, grinding and scraping. Feet dig into the ground for purchase. Those in the rear ranks put their shoulders to those in front and grind forwards. Spears jab, axes sweep over shields, swords slice and cut. Faces contort with the effort. Skin becomes slick with blood and sweat and tears. Men feel the hot breath of the enemy gusting on their faces. They are forced to trample on the bodies of their fallen comrades and kin.

General Franzreich knew what was in store for his men when he said, 'Ah infantry, poor beggars,' to me at the Battle of Greinbach Field. So did Sigmar, which is why he fought with them. He had forged the tribes into an army, and he led them from the front.

As the cavalry and wild men retreated, the orcs followed. They bellowed their fury at the impudent humans who had humiliated them. They trod over the bodies of their fallen and spat on them in disgust. The men looked at a solid wall of steel, wood, and green flesh which stretched from one valley wall to the other. At twenty paces, the orcs charged, faces contorted, legs pumping, shields forward and spears aloft. When the lines met, the valley shook with the sound like a thunderstorm ripping up a thousand trees; shields butted, spears split, men and orcs died in droves. The impact was so great that the battle line nearly split in many places, but Sigmar's men were strong and they braced, heaved and pushed back against the foe.

The Grind began.

After the initial flourish of the berserkers' fury and the triumphant cavalry charge, the particular deployment and battle tactic employed by Sigmar precluded alteration or room to manoeuvre. The battle was fixed in both its position and in its execution. Man, dwarf and orc stood toe to toe, pushing, hacking, thrusting and dying. The first side to blink would lose.

The orc warboss matched Sigmar's bull-headedness with his own. He saw that Sigmar was not employing a complex plan, as he had on other occasions. It seemed the humans were trying to match him in a contest of strength, blow for blow. He advanced all his forces and ordered them to overrun the humans and wipe them out. Orcs are stronger than men, and far outnumbered them on this occasion. The warboss must have been confident of victory.

In pitched battles in Sigmar's day, those attacking a shield-wall would have retreated and charged, retreated and charged in an effort to break through. But at Black Fire Pass, the orcs were so tightly packed together and their ranks were so deep, backing up to prepare for a charge was out of the question. All the sides could do was rotate the front fighting ranks with fresh troops whenever they could. Men fighting in such a situation tire in minutes, no matter how strong they are.

Archers in the rear echelons of each army rained missiles down onto the melee, and the catapults continued their bombardment. Orcs carried dead bodies back to their stone throwers to be used as ammunition to kill and terrify; another example of how they use terror to undermine a foe.

Minutes dragged into hours and by midday the battle line had not moved. On the flanks, where the ground sloped and was strewn with boulders and trees, the skirmishers vied with each other. Wolf riders bounded over rocks, only to be scattered by concentrated fire from hidden archers and staggered lines of javelin hurlers. The mixed skirmishers of the tribes held back a huge force of wolf riders that day; their heroism saved the main battle line from what would have been a devastating flank attack, if the foul goblin cavalry had got amongst them.

On the left flank, Menogoth slingers and war dogs were advancing on a band of goblin archers who were firing down on the infantry below. It seemed an inconsequential skirmish, but something happened there that turned the tide of the battle.

THE DEATH OF A KING. Sigmar was a warrior king, a fighting general, and he stood by his men where the fight was hardest. His place was not behind the lines giving orders; he led by the example of his bravery and martial prowess, inspiring his men to feats unsurpassed. Wherever he strode, covered in orc blood, his eyes shining and bright, his men cheered and fought all the harder for their beloved leader.

The benefits of Sigmar doing this are obvious, and so too are the risks. If he was killed, the battle would be over. The unity of forces was forged by Sigmar and only his presence bound it together. His loss would spell the loss of everything.

By mid-afternoon, the battle was at a stalemate. The men and dwarfs were exacting a massive price from the orcs, but their line was thin, and it was weakening every minute. Reserves were brought up to shore up the wavering line but time and time again sections would collapse, only for the rabid orcs to be thrown back by cavalry charges until more infantry could be mustered to plug the gap. Sigmar watched this from the left flank, which King Markus of the Menogoths had been charged with holding.

Marbad had sent a runner to ask for aid because a large force of goblin archers were making their way to his position and his men were in danger of becoming swamped. Sigmar answered the call himself, accompanied by a contingent of his bodyguards. The goblins advanced on the humans, grinning and cackling behind their lowered spears as those behind fired arrows in whistling waves at the bloody melee below.



Orc warboss, 'Bloodstorm', takes flight on his wyvern to meet Sigmar in personal combat. It was to prove folly.

Sigmar led a furious charge at the goblins, but before he reached them, wolf riders leapt on them from above, teeth snapping and claws raking. Taken by surprise, the humans fell back and many died. Only Sigmar stood his ground, and it was nearly his undoing; a cunning greenskin threw a handful of dirt in Sigmar's eyes and as he blindly staggered, the goblins closed in. Before they could strike, King Marbad hurled himself at them and single-handedly drove them off. As he bent to help Sigmar up, he was struck in the neck by an arrow and fell down dead. It was then that the legendary sword of Ulfshard was lost forever.

As the Menogoths cried out in grief and pursued the goblins, Sigmar knew what he had to do. The battle had to end, and only he could make that happen.

DUEL TO THE DEATH. Who knows what would have happened if Sigmar had not acted then? Most scholars believe that despite the courage of the men and dwarfs, the orcs would eventually have whittled the lines down to nothing and won the day. Sheer numbers would have been the deciding factor. As it was, the battle was eventually decided by the superhuman actions of one man: Sigmar Heldenhammer, scourge of the greenskins.

He rode his horse behind his wavering infantry line. He saw the fatigue in his warriors' faces and the pall of defeat resting heavily on their straining shoulders. It was time to do something to show the way, to stop the tide from overwhelming them. It was time to end the bloodshed.

Sigmar climbed onto a boulder in three bounds and with a roar of defiance, leapt over the heads of his men to land amongst the startled orcs. Ghal Maraz whirled, striking orcs from their feet and rending bones to mush. Men gaped in amazement as their great leader disappeared in front of them, his position betrayed by the orc bodies that flew through the air like ragdolls.

Did Sigmar want to inspire his men by his actions, or try to beat the orc horde on his own? Probably a portion of both, but whether he expected or even planned the response from the orc warboss is a mystery. He placed himself in a vulnerable position, becoming a tempting target. The warboss saw the bodies mount around Sigmar, but no man could fight with such ferocity for long; he took the bait, looking to kill Sigmar himself.

The warboss urged his wyvern from its roost and glided down towards Sigmar. A cry went up from the men as the gigantic orc and his beast bore down on their king. By then, Sigmar was standing on a mound of corpses and the orcs were beginning to falter. Larger orcs pushed smaller ones to the front, only to see them struck down by Sigmar's rage.

The beating of leathery pinions alerted Sigmar to the warboss's approach. The wyvern landed by Sigmar and the duel began. They traded mighty blows, roaring their hatred. Axe and hammer struck sparks and the fate of men hung in the balance. Legend says that Sigmar dropped his hammer because the haft was slick with blood. Seizing his chance, the warboss prepared to inflict the killing blow, but before he could, a javelin struck the wyvern in the neck, then an arrow, then a stone. Men from the tribes fought to



the body pile and hurled themselves on the beast, striking it down with many blows.

Then Sigmar stood over the stricken body of the warboss and stove in his skull with his hammer. The Battle for Black Fire Pass was over. Sigmar had won the day.

CONCLUSION AND LEGACY. At the time of the Battle of Black Fire Pass, the fate of men was far from assured. The tribes were disunited and as well as fighting their common enemies, they fought each other. It took a threat of great magnitude and a leader willing and able to forge the tribes together and fight for a common cause to ensure our race survived. If Sigmar had failed to do this, the orc invasion would surely have cowed mankind, and the burgeoning strength of our people snuffed out in its infancy. The legacy of the battle is, quite simply, the survival of the human race and the germination of a united Empire.

Sigmar's decision to meet the enemy before they reached his lands was crucial. It restricted the orcs' movement and they could not make their huge numbers tell as they were funnelled by the walls of the pass. Sigmar's aggressive advance was followed by a bravura attack with his berserkers and cavalry to ensure the orcs came to him where his defensively stationed infantry could soak up the punishment.

However, it was clear that after nearly a day's fighting, the tide was turning against Sigmar's host. His strategy had been sound and he used his warriors to their full advantage, but he was fighting a losing battle; in time, his line would have thinned and eventually broken. The crisis point of the battle came when Sigmar recognised the inevitable defeat of his army and turned the tide in his favour, by engaging the warboss in single combat and prevailing.

After the battle, Sigmar was renowned throughout the land as a hero. He made it his mission to continue his work in bringing the tribes together as allies. The road was rocky and Sigmar faced many more challenges, but in the end the iron will he demonstrated at the battle of Black Fire Pass won through. Sigmar is the father of our Empire, born in the blood and sacrifice of that famous mountain range far to the south. Hail Sigmar, for to him we owe everything.

Empire at War Glossary and Gazetteer

Altdorf – The capital city of the Empire and seat of the Emperor, Karl Franz.

Aver – River that runs along the northerly border of Averland.

Averland – Southerly province of the Empire with borders to the Moot, Stirland and Wissenland.

Black Fire Pass – Route of the Old Dwarf Road through the Black Mountains.

Black Mountains – Range to the south-east of the Empire.

Black Powder – Explosive substance used in the firing of cannons, hand-guns and other similar machineries.

Blood Hollow – cradle-like valley in the Middle Mountains.

Bögenhafen – Town neighbouring the Reikwald Forest.

Bögenhafen Dog Soldiers – Mercenary knight regiment.

Border Princes – Lawless, mountainous land to the south of the Empire.

Brass Keep – Fortress situated in the Middle Mountains.

Drakwald – Forest overlooked by the city of Middenheim, infamous for the beatmen and other dark creatures rumoured to dwell there.

Elector Count – Provincial and state ruler of the Empire.

Erengard – the main trading city and port of Kislev.

Estalia – Foreign land to the south-west of the Empire.

Flagellant – Homeless zealot, obsessed with the coming of the End Times.

Flank & Rout – Military term. The destruction of a force through out-flanking it when already engaged.

Freelancer – A mercenary knight.

Footslogger – Derogatory term for an infantryman.

Forlorn Hope – A thin line of troops facing overwhelming odds with little or no chance of victory.

Ghal Maraz – The mighty rune hammer gifted to lord Sigmar by the dwarfs.

Grandmarshall – High ranking officer in the armies of the Empire second only to Reikmarshal.

Grand Theogonist – Spiritual leader of the Church of Sigmar.

Grape shot – Improvised shot for cannon, consisting of rusty nails, coils and other sharp projectiles producing a deadly, short-range blast.

Grey Mountains – Range to the south of the Empire, bordering the province of Reikland.

Grind – A standing fight where two shieldwalls meet and grind together.

Hel Fenn – Site of the defeat of Mannfred von Carstein.

High Priest of Ulric – Spiritual leader of the cult of Ulric.

Ice Queen – Current ruler of Kislev and powerful ice wizard.

Ironbreaker – Dwarf regiment that guards the great tunnels of their subterranean realm.

Jutones – Savage and primitive tribe of men during the time of Sigmar.

Karaz-a-Karak – Ancient capital of the old dwarf empire, known as 'Everpeak'.

Kislev (country) – Allied land to the north of the Empire, bordering the province of Ostermark.

Kislev (city) – Capital city of the land of Kislev.

Knights of Sigmar's Blood – Ancient order of Sigmarite knights.

Knights of the Divine Sword – Ancient temple order of knights famous for their part in the defeat of Mannfred von Carstein at the Hel Fenn.

Knights of the Blazing Sun – Order of knights founded during the Crusades against Araby and worshippers of the goddess Myrmidia.

Kossar – Kislevite infantryman armed with axe and bow.

Levy – Non-professional troops drafted into battle, usually from the peasantry.

Lynsk – Kislevite river.

Marienburg – Independent cityport, known for its wealth and exotic markets.

Marshall – Middle rank in the army of the Empire below Landmarshall.

Middenheim – City of the Empire, also known as the City of the White Wolf.

Middle Mountains – Range to the north of the Empire bordering Hochland.

Nuln – City state of the Empire, once the court of the Emperor but now renowned as the home of the Imperial Gunnery School.

Ostermark – Northerly province of the Empire.

Ostland Black Guard – Veteran greatsword regiment affiliated with Morr, god of death and dreams.

Order of the Black Rose – Ancient temple order of knights.

Order of the Thorny Rose – Prestigious military award unique to Stirland.

Phalanx – Close order infantry formation usually armed with long spears or pikes.

Pistolier – Cavalry regiment formed from the sons of Empire nobles and armed with pistols.

Praag – City of Kislev razed during the Great War Against Chaos and subsequently rebuilt, forever to bear the taint of its initial destruction.

Pyromancy – Fire magic practiced by the Bright Order of wizards.

Reiklandguard (Reiksguard) – Former name of the Reiksguard, knightly bodyguards of the Emperor.

Sea of Claws – Northerly sea that separates the Empire from the land of Norsca.

Shadow Lake – Body of water close to the site of the vampire count, Mannfred von Carstein's demise at the Battle of Hel Fenn.

Shieldwall – Defensive formation made by locking shields together and bracing them against an enemy charge.

Skirmisher – Lightly armed scout.

Spierrestrasse – The narrow road that connects the watch towers around the Taalbaston.

Stir – River that runs along the northerly border of Stirland.

Stirland – Province of the Empire bordering the Worlds Edge Mountains and encompassing the land of Sylvania.

Sylvania – Land of the vampire counts of old.

Taalbaston – The walls of the crater in which lies the city of Talabheim.

Talabec – Major river of the Empire that runs through the province of Talabecland.

Talabecland – Province of the Empire noted for its dense forests.

Talabheim – City state of the Empire, located within the Great Forest.

Talastamm – Tributary of the Talabec river.

The Great Forest – Massive area of woodland stretching from the Middle Mountains in the north to Nuln in the south and from Altdorf in the west to the borders of Kislev in the east.

Templars of Taal – Temple knights of Taal, god of nature and wild places.

Templars of the White Wolf – Temple knights of Ulric, god of wolves and winter.

Tilea – Land to the south of the Empire, beyond the Border Princes, renown for its mercenaries.

Tzar/Tzarina – Male and female ruling class of Kislev.

Unberogen – The tribe of Sigmar, before the formation of the Empire.

Wizard's Way – Tunnel that goes through the steep walls of the Taalbaston.

Wood Warriors – Bizarre cult warriors from the time of Sigmar.

Zweihafen – Village situated at the banks of the Talabec river.

Zwei-hander – Two-handed greatsword.

Winged Lancers – Kislevite cavalry, so named for the large feathered banners worn on their backs.

Wissenland – Southern most state of the Empire. Encompasses the former realm of Solland.

Worlds Edge Mountains – Range that stretches the entire eastern fringe of the Empire and the ancestral home of the dwarfs.

READING LIST

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*‘The cost of victory is blood,
the cost of defeat is everything.’*

Publisher's Note

Altdorf Press is proud to publish this eminent study of the Art of War by Grandmarshall Blucher von Vincke. We are however saddened to inform the reader that at the time of printing, we received news that Grandmarshall von Vincke had been killed in battle. After being urged back into service by the Emperor Karl Franz, to fight the Chaos hordes massing in the north. Following a victorious campaign, he was shot from his horse whilst crossing the river Lynsk on his return to the Empire.

His name will be remembered in the Book of the Honourable Dead.

Alastamm

Zweihasen

Forheit Hills

Fortified Jam

Stirlander
Supplies

To
Durtbad
1232 miles



Matt Ralphs lives in Nottingham. As well as several background books, his published work includes *Blood on the Reik* and *The Life of Sigmar*.

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